

HOLLYWOOD
SHORTS

CHARLES RAY

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HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

COMPILED FROM INCIDENTS IN
THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF MEN
AND WOMEN WHO
ENTERTAIN IN
PICTURES

by

CHARLES RAY

Los Angeles
California

CALIFORNIA GRAPHIC PRESS
1935

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by Charles Ray

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**The illustrations in this book are
lovingly dedicated to Charles Ray
by
Janice and Fred Penney**

To Mother and Father

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ONCE A BABY

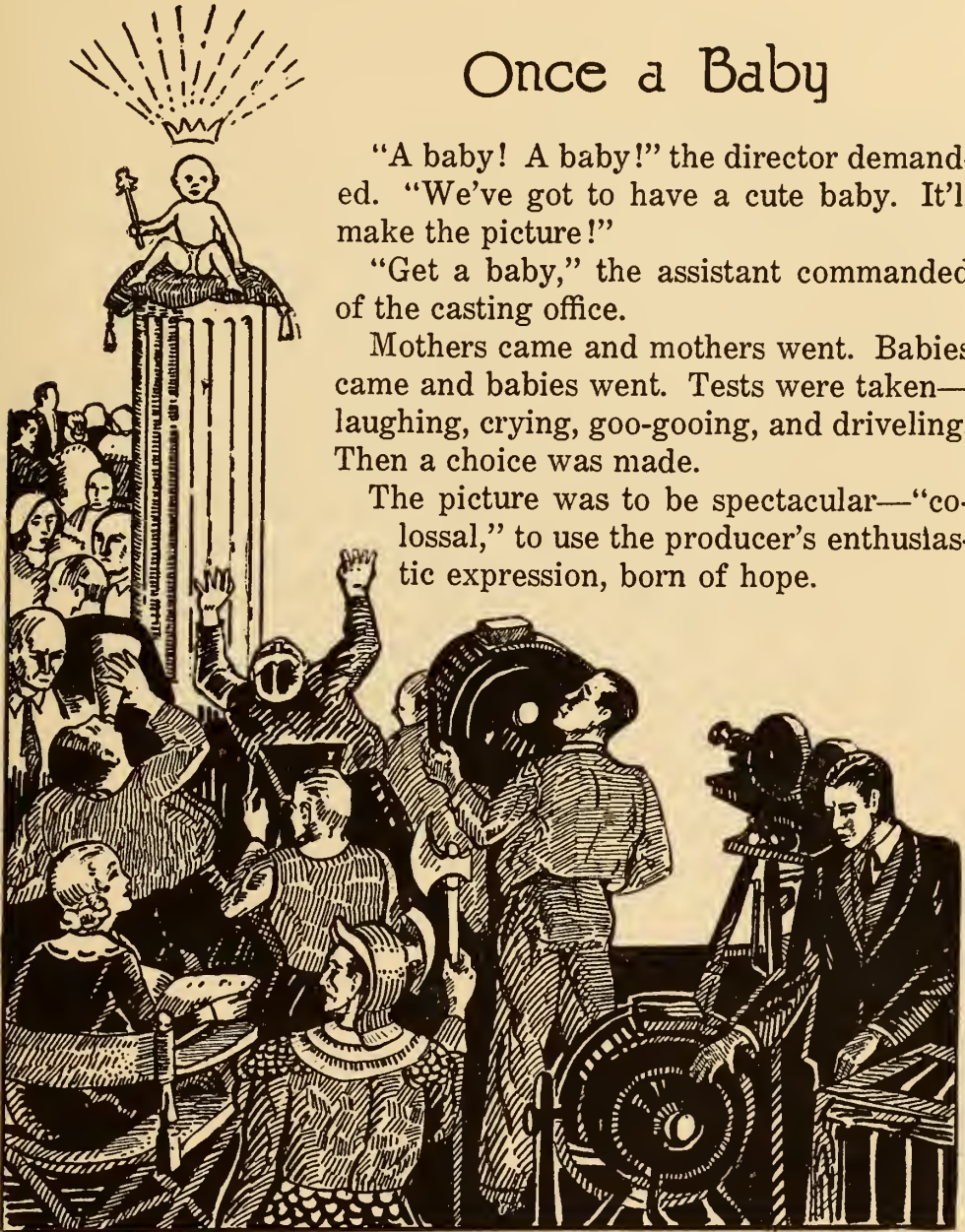
Once a Baby

"A baby! A baby!" the director demanded. "We've got to have a cute baby. It'll make the picture!"

"Get a baby," the assistant commanded of the casting office.

Mothers came and mothers went. Babies came and babies went. Tests were taken—laughing, crying, goo-gooing, and driveling. Then a choice was made.

The picture was to be spectacular—"colossal," to use the producer's enthusiastic expression, born of hope.



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"Yes," all employees agreed, and whispered, "The picture of the year," to any listener.

Violent activity began. Romans hurried about the lot in togas, in armor, and in the near-nude painted a swarthy brown. Greeks carried huge spears. Fiery steeds hauled gilded chariots. Wise men stroked long, false beards, assimilating their characters after true information from the research department.

Enthusiasm reigned. The studio became an ant hill of activity.

Cameras finally began to grind. Battle scenes were shot and reshot day after day. Pontoons were constructed. False rivers were crossed by sweeping hordes. Castle walls crumbled and drawbridges collapsed at the command of the forces plying the battering rams and catapults. The successful engines of war cleared the path for the new master. The city fell. Then a king rode a white horse through the conquered streets while the populace bowed mutely in obeisance. Former first citizens were made slaves. Replacing horses, they drew heavy chariots containing the conquerors, and silently bore their cross.

"Now the baby!" the director shouted. "That intimate touch will get them. That heart appeal!"

"Call the baby!" the assistant commanded.

"Call the baby," the casting office relayed.

"Okay, the baby," the mother responded.

Innumerable scenes were shot with the baby crying, laughing, gooning, and playing at the feet of the king.

The king was human; he melted. Life's great miracle, in a cradle, had done it. The city was restored. The monarch rode

ONCE A BABY

away at the rear of his armies, signifying his sackcloth-and-ashes repentance.

The picture ended with great gusto. The cutting ensued. The editing was completed. Executives previewed it "on the sneak." It was rotten.

"Call the baby!" the director shouted.

"Call the baby," the assistant commanded.

"Okay, the baby," the mother responded.

New sets were built, and whole sequences were taken over. Carpenters toiled. Painters smeared. The castle was reestablished, the battered walls were mended, the drawbridges were repaired, the moat was filled with water; then an army swarmed like bees about the battlements in deathly siege.

"Now the baby!" the director demanded, and took:

*Shots to the right of it,
Shots to the left of it.
Shots in front of it,
Volleyed and thundered,
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Bravely he filmed and well,
But his ego made him say "swell"
While horse and hero fell,
Into the camera range
Hitting the ground like hell,
And still he blundered.*

The picture was cut and previewed again. The critics had their way. The first-nighters guffawed. The director slumped. The studio went morbid. The assistant went haywire. The prop man went alcohol—and the producer went mad.

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Weeks passed. Months passed. The cutting and editing continued. Sincere endeavor brought improvement. Having lifted the depression somewhat, the director gained the producer's confidence again, and shouted:

"Call the baby!"

"Call the baby," the casting office relayed.

"Baby doesn't live here any more," a new voice answered.

In muffled whispers to the prop man, the assistant confided: "What do you suppose we will do? The casting office is passing the buck 'cause they failed to get the baby's new address. If I tell the chief that, he'll can me. He always slips me a bonus at the end of each picture, but the proviso is that I never fail him."

The prop man stuttered an inspiration.

"Fix it up with the casting office by takin' the blame. Tell 'em to keep mum, sayin' that the baby's sick. Then you and me will start an African hunt. Okay?"

"What a pal!"

Weeks passed.

"Do I get that baby?" the director shouted. "If it's still sick, I'll photograph it that way. That's a swell idea!" and he hurried to confer with the scenario chief.

"Goodbye, pal," the assistant whispered to the prop man. "I'm headin' for the last round-up. I'm handin' in my resignation. It's all over with me."

"What in hell you doin' that for?"

"I got to take the rap. I got information that I don't dare reveal. The staff couldn't take it from a goof like me. So I'm washed up."

"Yuh don't have to be afraid of me. Spill it."

ONCE A BABY

“Nope, I don’t dare stay around any more after explainin’. So why explain? Let ’em find out for themselves.”

He winked sadly.

“Come on, pal. Give.”

“Okay, but you better keep mum. Funny cracks will get you thrown out, you know. Listen to this one. It’s the only thing that’s colossal about this funny horse opera. We’ve been on this picture about two years, all in all, haven’t we?”

“Yeah, maybe a little more. Why?”

“Well, nobody on this lot has ever tumbled to the fact that a baby grows up. They’ll die when they realize it. I found the new address today, saw the baby we used, and am I dumb like the rest? Why, the kid’s nearly got whiskers.”



The Double's Cross

"You'll pull through all right," the doctor lied.

"Yes, I know I will," a girl answered in the same forced tones that he had used.

The nurse patted her cheek. "Yes, the doctor's convinced," she parroted, smiled mechanically, and departed.

In a stunt which was just a little too much for the human frame, the double had replaced the star. Now she lay inert on a hospital bed with a white face and a broken bone somewhere; the doctor wouldn't designate the location. From that she concluded that it was her back. There were severe, sharp pains to contend with if she so much as moved an inch or two.

The hospital room was filled with flowers. The tables were heavy with them, and huge vases lined the floor like a garden. Gorgeous red roses, pink ones, white ones, and some as yellow as the sun, shed dewdrops of sympathy. The studio had sent most of them.

The yellow ones came from the star for whom she had doubled in the stunt. Each afternoon for the last three days, the actress had come to visit her and remained at the bedside for hours. At times, she held the invalid's hand; and when tears welled in her eyes, she feigned to look out of the window while wiping them away, and spoke of the sunshine outside.

But the star wasn't to blame. No one was. Stunts were demanded by a waiting public. The age was speedy, the populace neurotic, and the show must go on.

The girl's mind stopped arguing about the circumstances of her injury as the pain in her back increased.

THE DOUBLE'S CROSS

The morning had been a long one. A dreamy feeling was enveloping her, and a ringing had started in her ears, like great Sunday-morning church bells. Against her will, objects about the room began to swing asunder.

Occasionally her blinking eyes reestablished the objects; but they sprang out again, as if on rubber strings, and commenced weird movements with new dance partners.

She discovered the trick of closing one eye to stop the kaleidoscopic show. Her reflection was plain in the polished surface of the water jug; and it relieved her to know that her face wasn't distorted. Only her eyes seemed to be covered with a film, whenever she could focus them at all.

Shortly, a mist started covering everything in the room, like fog effects she had encountered in picture making. Then, oddly to her, she saw a man on a high platform shouting for more fog. Of course, it was the director, calling to his assistant, trying to improve the scene with more smoke pots which represented the fog.

Yes, she could see more clearly now. They were making a scene for a picture she had been working in—a retake. They were using the big studio gates as a background. But the gates weren't really familiar. They were wider by far, and a great deal taller than any she had ever seen. They were painted to represent gold, a lot nicer than the ones at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios.

Presently the administration building came into view. She saw someone hurrying in her direction, shouting that there was plenty of work for everyone, that they should go inside and register. Everything was strange; it had never been so before.

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"They want you for a part," the kind-faced attendant informed her.

"You must be mistaken," she answered confidently. "Not a part. You must mean a part doubling, don't you?"

"No," the man assured, "you're through with that work."

As she moved past the doorman, she turned back to leave a message with him; but he surprised her by anticipating her thoughts.

"I'll tell your mother and Mr. Wayne where you are," he stated omnisciently.

The inside of the building was so large that she could not see the end of the halls. Their perspective reached to infinity. Immediately on her right and left were colossal doors. The most beautiful had a name on it which she could hardly distinguish—a Mr. Gold something-or-other.

Then she instantly felt stupid, remembering about the merger. Everything was under one head now. That wasn't Mr. Gold something-or-other inscribed on the first door. It was Mr. God. He was the new producer.

The next instant the hospital room faded in over everything. The ocean waves of monotony started annoying her again. Her parched lips seemed to curl, swelling up with an intense heat.

"Water!" she cried fiercely, or thought she did.

Bestial forms ran into the room, forming themselves in lines pruriently against the walls. To block out the hideous images, she closed her eyes tightly; but a frightening ptosis compelled her to aid the levator muscles by holding her eyes open with her two fingers. An increasing stomatitis caused her to grind her teeth, until the vise-like security indicated paralysis of the jaw.

THE DOUBLE'S CROSS

Suddenly the whirling in her head stopped. A gradual relaxation ensued. Composure enveloped her. She heard the assistant's tread; then saw him stick his head into the room to give her a call.

"Hey, Double!" he yelled goodnatureedly. "The Chief sent me after you. You all set to go again? He's ready for that big scene now. Feel okay about it? Let's step on it. This new director's sure speedy, an' rarin' to go. He claims that he's got a new stunt that nobody in the whole world has seen. Stage two."

Peacefully she watched jolly scene-shifters enter and move the walls of her room away.



A Writer's Cramp

Mr. Howard J. Morris was a dramatist. He had three successful plays to his credit on the Gay White Way. New York had acclaimed him properly by bowing to all three. Quite an enviable position.

Talkies had taken the country by storm. The end of the silent drama had come. Writers of even insignificant offerings were grabbed for contracts by the studios on the Coast, who vied with one another for signatures. Hollywood had gone "legit," with a battle cry: "The play's the thing." It was a writer's year.

Hollywood went after Mr. Harold J. Morris. Subtly Mr. Morris went after Hollywood. They sparred frantically like pugilists. At last a mutual contract was agreed upon which thrilled Mr. Morris. He left Broadway for his first trip to Los Angeles, with a California-here-I-come attitude, and on arrival, met a welcome which warmed his heart. A major corporation had bid for and won his services. He was as happy as a bride.

But not for long. Loneliness crept into his world. After he was made exceptionally comfortable in a pretentious office, no one spoke to him. He didn't even see anyone, except when he gazed out of his window onto the expanse of the studio grounds, or when he went to lunch. Often he took a stool at a counter or rudely sat at a table marked "reserved," in the hope of finding out what might be going on in the sea of activity about him.

Now and then, on the walks between the huge stages, through sheer desperation he said "nice day" to someone—anyone. But a nod in recognition was all he received. All who ever passed him seemed to be in a frantic hurry, like ants bent on some

A WRITER'S CRAMP

important mission, seriously concentrating on its accomplishment. Only he went and came with nothing to do. Exasperating.

Time began to hang heavily on his hands. No assignment having been given to him, he wondered if he might have offended someone—someone they always called “big shot” cautiously, and by his first two initials respectfully. How could he find out? But after pondering deeply upon the subject, he reasoned that he could not have offended anyone if he did not see anyone to offend. An excellent hypothesis, a true deduction. Preposterous. Yes—nuts!

He exhausted the current magazines and took up solitaire. Then he reread the book of rules on bridge, got melancholy, and longed for New York.

After three weeks of loneliness, an idea flashed into his mind as to how to gain attention. After weighing the matter mentally for an hour, he decided. He went out and got what is commonly called *drunk*.

Three days later, with head hanging sheepishly and brain crowded with remorse, he went to an executive's office to apologize. Humiliating.

The executive was in solemn conference, had been for some time; but the secretary advised that she would try to arrange an appointment at the earliest possible moment. However, it might be a day or two, perhaps three. She would be nice and “squeeze him in.”

A week went by.

Torn with emotions, Mr. Howard J. Morris made a final decision which calmed him somewhat. His resentment toward the firm for not giving him an assignment was bad enough, but

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to be ignored utterly was the last straw. He would leave it all and go where he was appreciated. He'd laugh it off on the train back to New York. If they thought "to hell with him," then he'd think "to hell with them." Fifty-fifty. No malice, no hard feelings. Just nuts!

Old Broadway was a cheering sight to Mr. Morris, until he swung into a telephone booth to say "cheerio" to close pals. When he found that the first three he called had recently left for Los Angeles, he relented to a quick impulse to get away from everyone and hurriedly made arrangements for passage to Europe.

A week in London was dreary to him. A week in Paris was a little gayer; but no one to enjoy it with irked him. Just as he was deciding on Berlin, melancholy enveloped him. Foreign people were no more friendly than the studio group at Hollywood. Disgruntled and restless, he sailed for New York.

A heavy sea, a relieved stomach, and the calm which followed gave Mr. Morris a kindly feeling for his fellow man. With conscience as the accusing judge, he meditated not a little on his actions of the past four weeks.

Quite true, he had not severed his connections at the studio in a proper, and certainly not in a manly, manner. He had played the part of a schoolboy. Yes, it would all have to be rectified before he could have peace of mind again. It was now thoroughly clear; nothing to do but to return to Los Angeles and explain. After all, they might even now be worrying about his bodily welfare, what with kidnaping prevalent as it was. Demoralizing.

But the clickety-click of train wheels played a diabolical tattoo upon Mr. Morris's mind. The more he thought of the

A WRITER'S CRAMP

matter, the more he was forced to conclude upon two lines of attack. If they were benign, then okay; if not, why, he certainly was as capable of speech as of the written word. It wouldn't take much mental effort to hand out a mouthful of vicious missiles, make a sound picture of his own, if that seemed the necessary thing in order to bring everything to a positive conclusion. Yes, he reasoned carefully, preparation two ways on the subject was clever. Conjunction.

Entering his office at the studio just two hours after arriving, he found that there had been no change in the several accessories. Even the manner of the furniture arrangement declared his presence. The telephone was in the same peculiar position in which he always liked it placed, though he had never used it. Ah, Mr. Morris thought in compliment, that janitor has experience; he should be tipped. Only one new object caught the writer's eye. Carefully placed under his paper weight was a summons to see his superior.

Mr. Morris grinned. Thinking of his two-way attack gave him great relief. He played solitaire, waiting for the appointment.

The telephone rang, surprising Mr. Morris strangely. It was the first time he had ever heard it ring; so he gazed at it until consciousness prompted action. The girl at the board informed him that Mr. Gorinza wanted to see him immediately.

A secretary led the way through elaborately furnished offices into an inner sanctuary where the figure of Mr. Gorinza, large, commanding, and arrogant, struck a belligerent chord in the mind of the wayward author. The bifocal glasses he wore only added to Mr. Morris's self-consciousness, for they seemed to

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pierce the panoply to his secret.

Each split second he stood before the executive, he felt the plan for his two-way attack fading. After all, his artistic soul had been outraged. The maltreatment whipped him again with thongs that hurt. There was but one way to deal with a man who ran a studio in such a slipshod manner. He was prepared to top Mr. Gorinza on any attack that might be launched.

The executive stood calmly, not offering the writer a chair, as if it would take but a moment to impart sentence. His whole arrogant appearance blended emphatically into the tone he used when he purred:

“Mr. Morris, I believe?”

“Yes,” the author answered, hanging on to the “s” and hissing it through a contracted jaw. “I am Howard J. Morris,” he emphasized. Then his anger shot his blood pressure up abnormally in an instant.

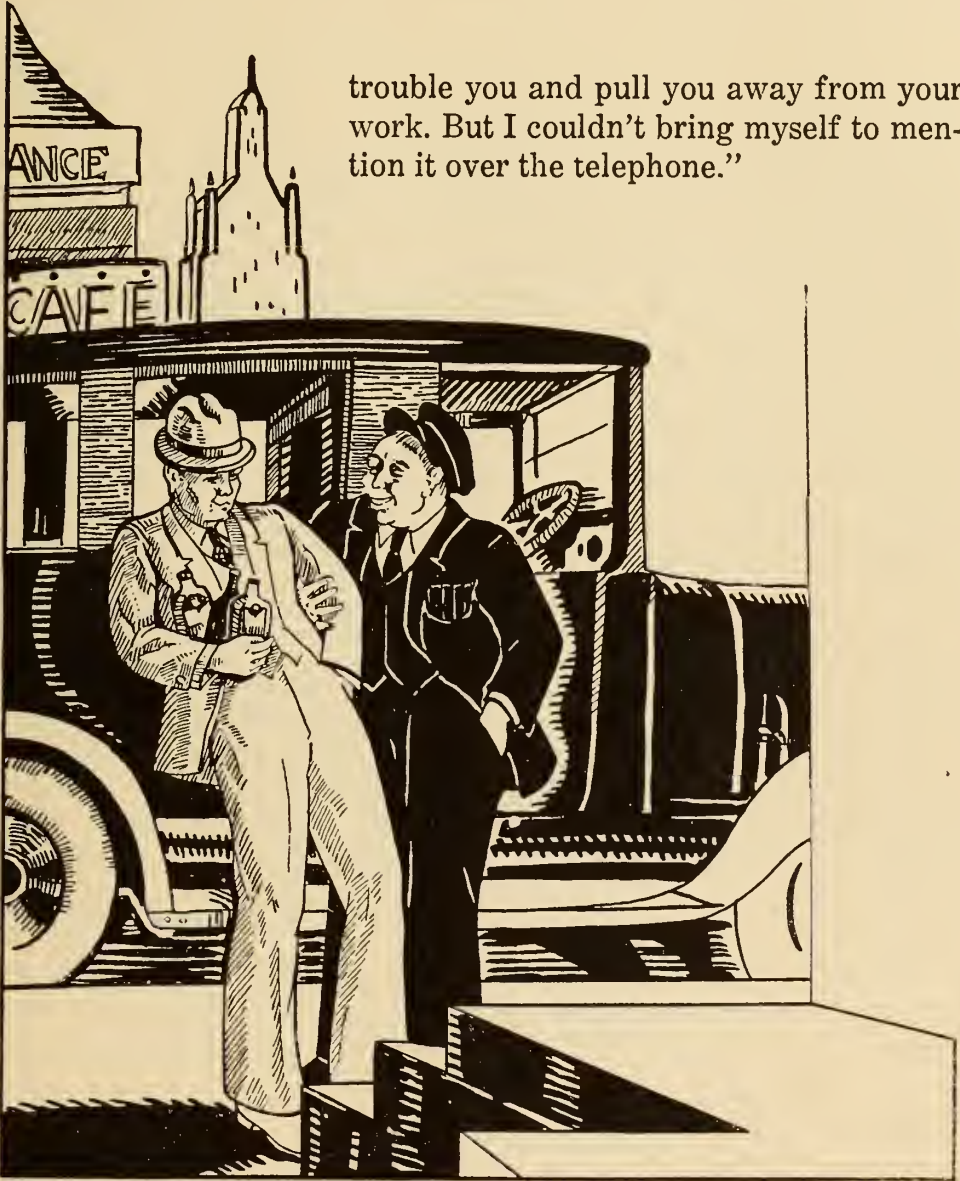
“I’ll take but a moment of your time, Mr. Morris; so I won’t ask you to sit. No use wasting your time. The fact is, Mr. Morris, well—I—for the sake of the organization I must reprimand you.”

“Yes!” the author hissed, with his best formulated phrases choking him for utterance.

“Yes. Our comptroller informs me that you are mixing the bookkeeping department up quite a little by not picking up your weekly pay-checks. I believe he said that there were nine of them in all, waiting. None have cleared. So you see your error. You can appreciate that, I’m sure. Won’t you be a good fellow and help to keep the department from bothering me? We’re so busy. I haven’t had any sleep to amount to anything for days and days. Well, that’s all there is to it, Mr. Morris. Sorry to have had to

A WRITER'S CRAMP

trouble you and pull you away from your work. But I couldn't bring myself to mention it over the telephone."



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Mr. Howard J. Morris felt fog enveloping him which didn't clear as he listened attentively.

"I understand that we are to have some fine stories from your pen during the year. That's fine. Well, we're getting started, aren't we?" With hand on the author's shoulder, the executive guided him to the door. "Now drop in and see me just any time. And," he lowered his voice, "you don't need to say anything to the department about all this. If they should make any comment at all, why—why, just say that you've been out of town."

After limply taking the executive's hand, Mr. Morris left the smiling presence in a daze. He went down the hallway hurriedly, but not to his office. Emotions were running riot within him; he needed to get away. And so to forgive himself, the firm, Mr. Gorinza, and the bookkeeping department, he took the day off.

A taxi driver told Mr. Morris of a swell new place and drove him there.

A few minutes later, the taxi driver had thoughts of his own concerning the brotherhood of man and all that. He stood alongside a great author, and returned the man's wide smile each time he wiped foam from his lips.



Stunt Man

Jim Warren wasn't a stunt man, but he lied rapidly and said he was in order to get the job. A sick mother and a desperate need gave him courage to say "yes."

The director sauntered up and down the river bank, inspecting different photographic angles which seemed inspiring to him. Finally he stopped abruptly in front of the aspirant.

"Where have you worked?" he asked Jim Warren quickly enough to addle him. "What have you done?"

"Why—why, I jumped off a precipice on a wooden horse," Jim boasted, describing a stunt he had seen on the screen. "Everybody at the U said it clicked okay. Didn't you catch the picture?"

A little preoccupied, the director nodded.

"That kind o' stunt don't take nerve," Jim assured. "It's knowin' your business. It ain't goin' into a stunt that's tricky. It's how you figure your come-out. You gotta know your business," he concluded, and spat to emphasize his last remark.

After a long puff at his cigarette, the director gave a non-committal grunt and moved away. After setting his cameras advantageously along the water's edge, he went to confer with the company business manager.

"I don't know why, but this stunt man has me worried," he protested. "He seems nervous."

"You're a chicken-hearted director."

"Don't kid!"

"All stunt men are as nervous as prima donnas," the manager said with an artificial laugh.

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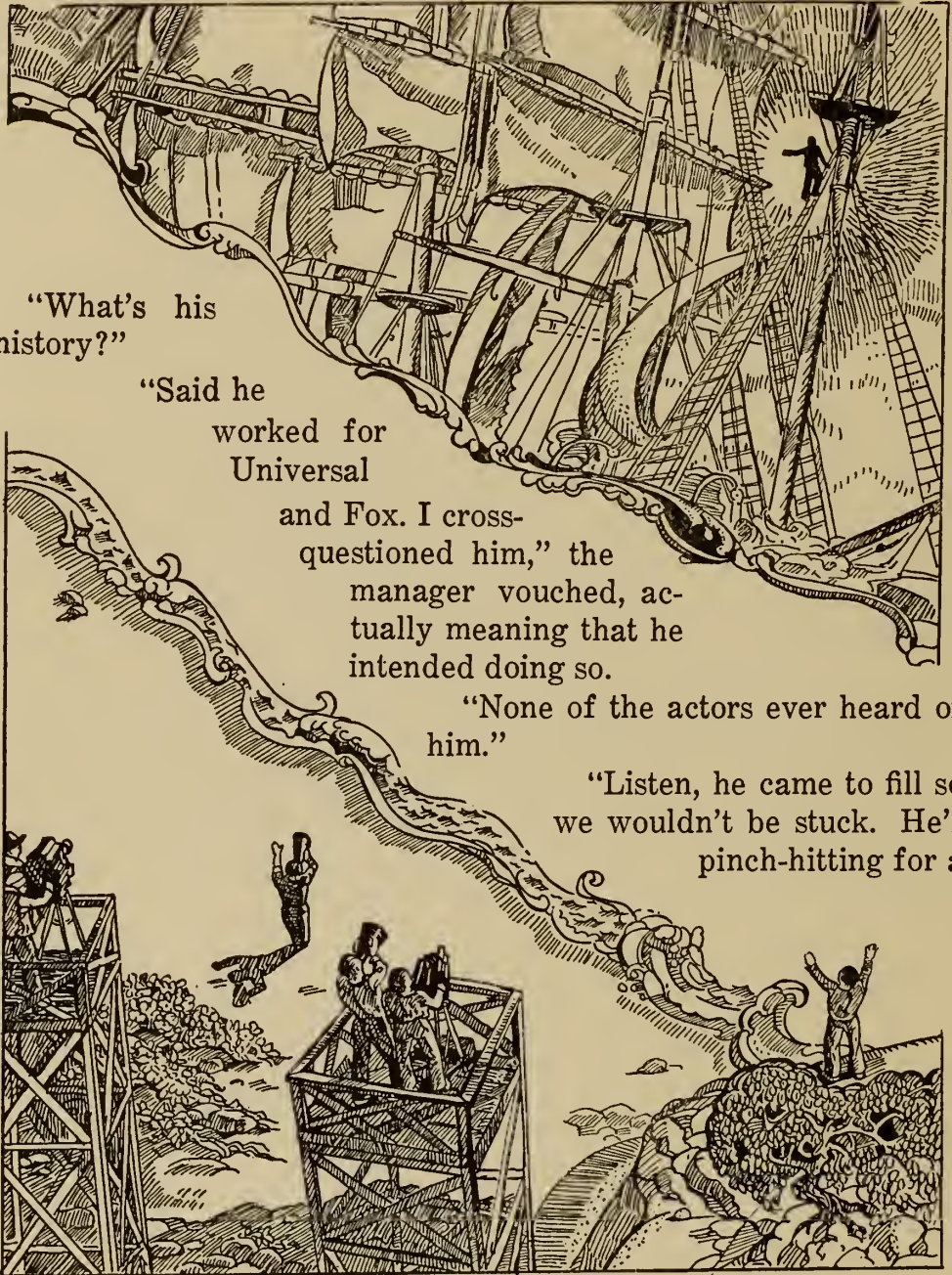
“What’s his
history?”

“Said he
worked for
Universal

and Fox. I cross-
questioned him,” the
manager vouched, ac-
tually meaning that he
intended doing so.

“None of the actors ever heard of
him.”

“Listen, he came to fill so
we wouldn’t be stuck. He’s
pinch-hitting for a



STUNT MAN

guy we engaged—on account of illness. Now are you satisfied?"

"Yeah? And we're way out here in the wilds and can't check on him."

For a few moments the two argued fiercely.

"Plenty else to worry about," the manager flared. "We either shoot this stuff now or the day's lost. That'll mean eighteen hundred dollars, because there's nothing back at the studio that we can do."

"But if the lad muffs, he'll never live to answer any more questions. Why take a chance?"

"I say shoot!"

"The blood's on your head!" The director lifted his voice for the benefit of his staff. "And get this: I shoot this scene under protest!"

A four-master had been towed into the mouth of the river. The ship was anchored to be silhouetted against the morning light. Harsh waves were slapping its sides, and whirling eddies rocked its masts widely.

With a shrewd eye, the director commanded the attention of the would-be stunt man.

"Now I'll explain once more," he began carefully. "You climb to the top of the first mast. Take your time. Get set and balanced properly, so when you dive you'll clear the deck easily. Swim under water to about this point."

Clearly he indicated the range of the cameras.

"We want plenty of footage before you come up," he continued. "The idea is that you're lost, giving us plenty of suspense. Understand?"

"Right."

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"That's it, then. Now do you still think you know what you're doing?"

"Don't worry about me."

"Then it's oak. We're ready when you are. Take your time. Get plenty of breath. You'll need it. And when you feel ready to dive, you give us an advance cue by waving your hands in the air. We'll grind on that signal."

Shaking knees cracked under the strain of climbing the rigging. Jim's nervousness mounted with the minutes. The tarred rope cut into his palms while the weaving mast bent to and fro furiously, resting for moments at horrible angles. The swerving, sagging rigging demanded leech-like security which sapped his strength, and the violent rebound went taut with a snap that all but sent his body catapulting into space—a stunt in itself for any sailor.

What seemed to be the utmost composure to those below on the river bank was merely waiting moments to Jim. With arms and legs wound tightly about the ropes at the top, his mind argued furiously concerning a descent, abandoning the stunt, and the humiliation he would suffer if onlookers saw him climb down again.

Minutes passed.

"What the hell is the matter with the goof?" the company manager grunted through set teeth.

"Why don't you go up and show him how it's done?" the director flung back sarcastically. "I told him to take his time."

Two arms suddenly shot into the air at the top of the mast, and a shout of approbation echoed along the river bank.

"Grind!" came the command from the director.

STUNT MAN

The tiny figure at the crow's nest left the rigging in the neatest dive that any Olympic contestant could present; but half-way down the hundred-foot descent, Jim's body careened. His kicking legs had no effect in an effort to right himself, and he struck the water ungainly, violently.

Breathless moments passed. The cameras ground on.

The chief camera man lifted an index finger, indicating a hundred feet of film.

"That's over a minute!" the director yelled. "That boy hasn't come up yet! Everybody run along the bank for sight of him. Life preservers ready! Ropes ready! Help!"

Frantically the prop man ran down the river bank, distributing paraphernalia to hurl into the water on sight of a struggling body.

Seconds passed into another minute.

Consternation reigned. Orders were shouted, and orders were ignored while everyone peered down into the opaque water.

The passing of another minute caused vibrations of anguish to surge through the onlookers. Hope faded rapidly into oblivion. Futility finally relaxed the tension, and all hands moved to and fro along the bank, silently exchanging tragic glances.

After a whispered conference, the manager and the director took a car into the adjoining town to acquaint the police of the tragedy.

Divers were sent out. The afternoon faded into evening, and torches were lighted along the river. Fires were kindled, so that the dripping divers could warm themselves before taking to the water again. Chilled hands held cups of steaming coffee;

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and now and then, a ribald jest echoed in the darkness, as if the long hours of searching demanded a change of subject.

Early next morning Jim Warren's body was found crushed against the prow of the ship, many feet below the surface of the water.

Morning newspapers proclaimed another casualty in the making of motion pictures for the entertainment of a public that demanded thrills which were not faked. The hum of activity at the studio slowed down perceptibly; and the company manager labored many hours over a letter to Jim Warren's mother.

The next day, the director walked soberly through his battery of cameras and signaled an advance cue to his torch bearers, ready to ignite a building into flames for an exceptional stunt. Then he drew alongside the company business manager.

"This new stunt man seems nervous," the director vouched, pointing to a man holding a rope on the roof of a tall building.

"All stunt men are as nervous as prima donnas," the company manager said with an artificial laugh.



Sans Tarte

“Abe, vot’s *sans tarte*?”

“Donno. Sounds it kinda dirty to me.”

“No, it don’t. It’s French.”

Abe and Ike Stein produced slapstick motion pictures back in the days when throwing pies was considered extremely funny. If a pie landed properly on an opponent, resembling a mud facial, it was considered a comical bull’s-eye.

One day Abe ran into the office out of breath, with not a little professional jealousy grueling him.

“C’mon, Ike,” he gasped, “let’s have it a conference. I got it. Now I know vot means it *sans tarte*. It’s dis Frenchman sayin’ it about us. Vot yuh tink? Like a pel, a bosom friend, I’m eskin’ yuh are yuh sore?”

“Aw, sit down. Somebody’s been kiddin’ yuh!”

“Don’t get med already. Ve got tuh do somethin’. It’s business. Listen, dot crack’s hokay. Vait till yuh hear vot means it. Yuh know dis Frenchman vot’s come over from Europe—from Gaumont—to make comedies from Ideal Films, Inc.? Vel, he’s been sayin’ it about us an’ de hokum ve make.”

“You’re nutty. Our stuff’s hittin hokay. Enswearing me dis vit straightforward figurin’?”

“An’ I’m enswearing like a pel, a bosom, business pel. Look, dis Frenchman says he ain’t goin’ tuh make comedies like ours. He’s goin’ tuh make ’em *sans tarte*!”

“Abe, I’m gettin’ kinda dizzy hearin’ dot tart stuff. C’mon,

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let's get goin'. Let's have a listen, vot means it? Look, am I busy, an' yuh bring me riddles!"

"Ike, I *am* explainin'. Dot *sans tarte* means it *without pies*. He claims he's goin' tuh make comedies without pies. Ike, he can't make comedies without pies!" After a few paces of the floor, he added: "Nobody ken!"

Weeks went by, and Abe entered the office with a dark countenance, quite financially disturbed. After pacing the floor in his usual panther manner, he lifted a bushy eyebrow in his partner's direction.

"Ike, you know vot? Ve gotta get dis Frenchman. Grab



S A N S T A R T E

'im vit a contract. If he makes pichers for us, you can add vot ve make to vot he makes, an' ve got de comedy field to ourselves, two vays from de middle, all sewed hop in de pocket!"

"Ve should worry! Ve got it already. It's in de basket vit clover. Ve are big frogs in de pond ve are frogs in."

"Sure, but de pond could be bigger. Tings is makin' progress mighty fast. Liddle by liddle tings go on improvin', even in de picher business. Yuh know vot I mean?"

"Vel, suppose he does make better comedies den ve do. Vot about it? Vot difference does it make in a hundred years from ven he starts?"

"Sure, better comedies. Hah!"

"Who said he made better comedies den ve do?"

"Dot's me too. Am I burnin'!"

"Vel, hokay den."

"Now dot's settled."

"Can't yuh effer come in de office vit sayin' somethin' vit construction? Listen, I'm busy an' yuh give me headaches. Ooo, am I busy, an' dot's always de time yuh bring riddles. Business is business! Don't mix it hop vit slander."

"I ain't, Ike. It's business tuh try an' get de Frenchman hooked vit a contract."

"Business, vel, vy didn't yuh say dot in de foist place? I don't mind stoppin' my work if it's for business, an' not riddles or back-scratchin'."

After much talk and many conferences, they got the Frenchman's signature to a contract; but the clever foreigner wrote his own ticket. He was to have no interference whatever. No one allowed on his set while shooting, the document outlined. And

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

no one was to see his picture until it was finally cut and edited.

Abe and Ike signed.

The first picture was made with the secrecy never before imagined. The set was enclosed, the story kept entirely masonic, the effects concealed, and the gags guarded like ammunition.

"An' I hear he didn't use no pies, Ike. Vot yuh tink?"

"I don' tink," Ike informed financially. "I jus' vait."

The picture was cut, and the showing arranged. Arrogantly the Frenchman entered the projection room with his staff, passing by Abe and Ike quite like a royal procession.

Like soldiers doing picket duty, Abe and Ike walked to and fro outside the projection room door, grunting at each other in solemn salute as they passed, thinking of their investment, with no possible chance of viewing the remains until sometime later when the Frenchman might condescend to acquiesce.

Minutes passed.

"Vel, vot yuh tink, Ike?" Abe groaned.

"I don' tink. I jus' vait."

But Ike worried himself into perspiration. Then an inspiration came. Sneaking into the projection booth behind the operator, he viewed the remaining part of the picture through the cubby hole, unbeknown to the arrogant foreigner. When he could sense the closing scenes of the film, he slipped out to meet an anxious partner pacing in financial guard duty.

"Vot yuh tink, Ike? How's de picher? Any good?"

Not desiring to be complimentary to the foreigner, Ike answered like a schoolboy: "Oh, it's hokay. Jus' about like ours."

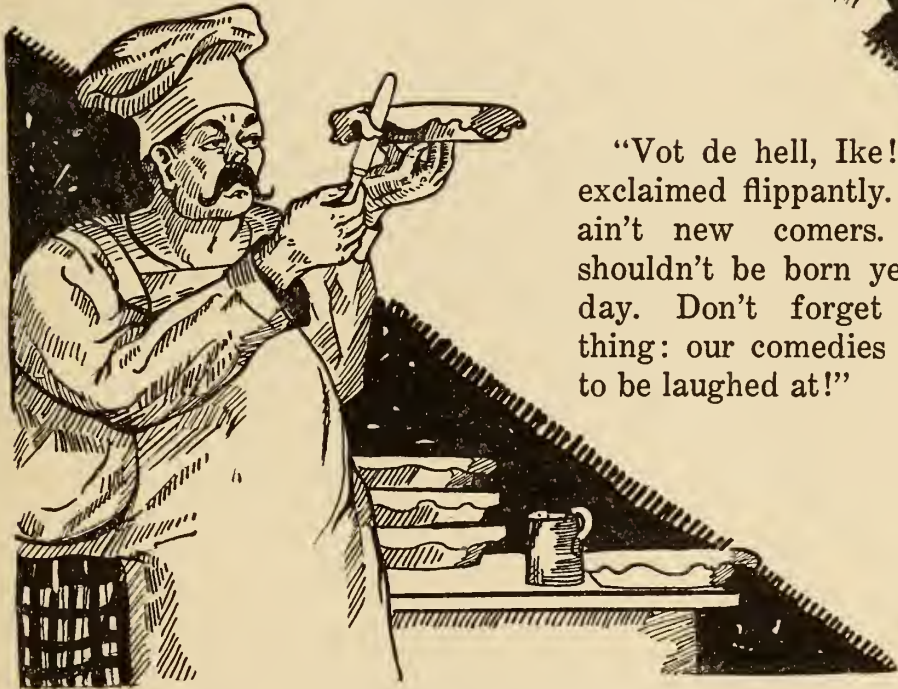
Abe winced. "Gee, as bad as dot?"

PIES

CAKE



As they walked slowly toward their office, he perked up and shrugged his shoulders.



“Vot de hell, Ike!” he exclaimed flippantly. “Ve ain’t new comers. Ve shouldn’t be born yesterday. Don’t forget one thing: our comedies ain’t to be laughed at!”



Adieu Hollywood

I have taken poison, he wrote courageously.

This is repeal night in Hollywood. Liquor is back, or will be, as soon as the zero hour arrives. It is announced in broad headlines across the newspaper I stole in order to read the Help Wanted ads; and from my hotel window, I can see gay throngs of people moving about in the streets. Huge trucks are unloading the night's supply at various cafes; jolly revelers are eagerly waiting for the legal alcoholic moment.

People will soon enter those restaurants, where the law demands that a sandwich be served with every order of wine or beer. Most of the sandwiches will be ignored, served, and re-served as dummies. Yet I sit here starving—but not for long.

A D I E U H O L L Y W O O D

The reason for this, my last note, is to attempt to leave evidence which will prove my sanity. So I will write my thoughts rapidly until I fall from my position at the desk, and if—

Shouting caused me to look into the street again. Groups are forming in front of the already crowded cafes. Police are forcing people into long lines down the sidewalks.

I feel a strange sensation now in the nerve centers of my body. The poison has begun its sinuous effect.

Have just heard the opening blare of band trumpets. It is a salute from a band down Hollywood Boulevard. Quite a number of musicians are seated on a large truck which is decorated with colored bunting. Boys and girls are holding long streamers attached to the truck, as to a Maypole. It seems to represent some sort of float. Yes, a parade is forming.

My respiration is a little faster now, and there is a numbness in my toes.

The truck has moved out in front of the paraders, and I recognize the music. Everyone is shouting the lyrics to that old song: "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight."

I cannot see as clearly now. A fine mist has covered my eyes.

The band has stopped playing. No, they have merely changed tunes—to a dirge. Men are walking slowly behind the truck, carrying their hats across the left breast. Torches are being ignited all along the line of march.

My feet feel as if they have gone to sleep. The numbness is creeping slowly up my legs. The sensation is not painful, just a sleepy feeling.

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

The parade is much closer now. I see four men carrying an effigy on long poles, like an old-fashioned sedan. Torches have been applied to the dummy. Its feet are circled in a blaze. The crowd in the street immediately below my window are watching the approach. Laughter and jeering echo against the buildings, but it is all goodnatured fun.

There is a jumping sensation in the calves of my legs and about my knees. I feel somewhat nauseated.

There is a long banner being unfolded before the effigy, stretching across the width of the street. I will try to make out the lettering on it. It reads: "Burn the Blue-nose." More than a hundred gay people have joined hands, dancing madly about the blazing dummy.

My stomach is burning very intensely now. My eyes are more misty. My nerves are giving little jumps with each heart beat.

The flames from the effigy are shooting into the air, touching the trolley wire. Confetti is flying everywhere. Office and hotel windows have been raised. Newspapers have been torn to bits and tossed down on the paraders. It looks like a snow-storm. The gayety is exceptional.

The pulse in my thumbs and at my temples is beating hard. The numbness in my fingers makes the pen rather difficult to hold. I will change to a pencil now. The pencil is much easier to hold; but I won't be able to write much longer. If I let my arm hang down momentarily, the fingers get relief.

The truck has reached the intersection, and the crowd is going mad with delight. The police are having a miserable time in clearing the way for a street car. The shouting and the

ADIEU HOLLYWOOD

action appear violent, resembling riot scenes in a motion-picture news reel.

I am forced to rest my fingers again.

Bells and whistles, all over the city, have commenced to augment the gayety. The added noise overtones the shouting below my window. The toy horns the funsters are using cannot be heard.

It certainly must signify the zero hour, for I see people rushing out of drug stores and markets with packages under their arms. Yes, it is the coveted hour. Liquor is back. The restaurant lines are moving slowly indoors. The musicians have deserted the truck, and the police officers are kicking the last remnant of burning effigy off the car tracks.

The din must be terrific, resembling armistice day, no doubt, although I cannot hear it any more because of a peculiar buzzing and ringing in my ears. The crown of my head feels as if a vibrator has been applied to it, and there is a numbness circling my hips.

The action below my window is gayety itself. Everyone seems tremendously happy, pelting each other with handfuls of confetti. I can hardly see the—

My heart gave a terrible jump just then; so I had better sign this note before it is too late.

My name is Arnold Delamar. I am twenty years of age. One year ago I came to Hollywood. Got plenty of work as an extra in motion pictures until recently. I have no relatives; so if I may be permitted, I desire to dedicate my body to the medical fraternity for the furtherance of knowledge to my fellow man. I wish—

A curved pencil scratch finished the note.

Chickens

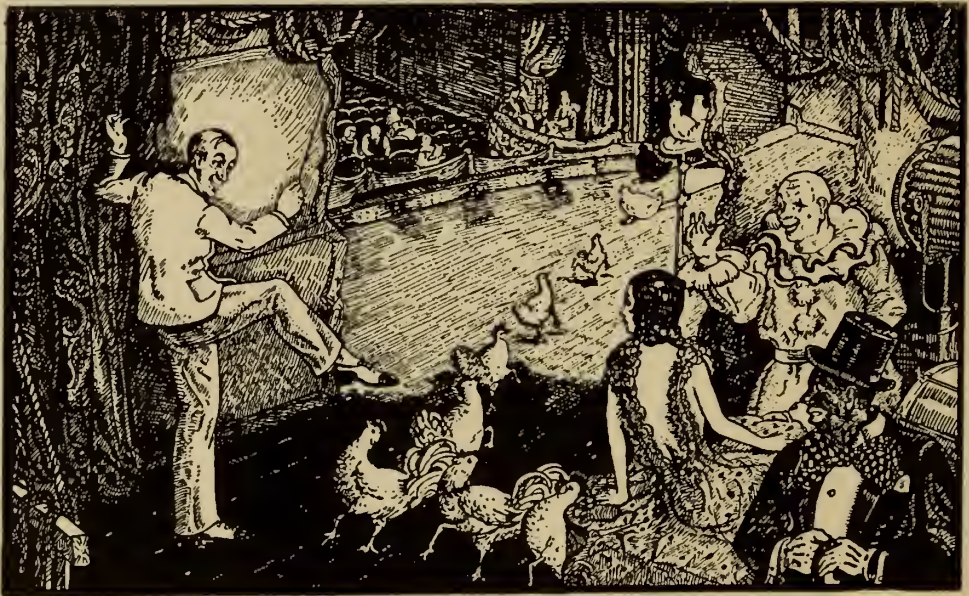
Bill Noel was a great animal trainer. He admitted it himself. Circus people lifted their eyebrows and mumbled, "Poor Bill!" when they heard he was enamored with chickens.

"And what an act I've got! The greatest in vaudeville. Wait until you catch it."

Bill was trying his persuasive powers upon an indifferent booking agent, and talking rapidly to keep from hearing any disheartening reply.

"Maybe so," the agent grumbled.

"But listen, I've trained these chickens for months," Bill



CHICKENS

hurried on. "Of course, I clown about on the stage to get additional laughs. The act wouldn't be nothin' without the by-play I give it, but the chickens make it all novel. See? Nothin' ever been like it!"

Wearily his agent grunted, "I'll see what I can do for you, Bill," and made a note on his desk pad.

"And the billing!" the hopeful one insisted. "You know, Noel and Chickens would make the audience think of *dames*. Imagine the laugh on the opening, when poultry struts on to music, an' I clown on after 'em. Swell? It makes the act start with a wow. Oak?"

A conversational pause made Bill laugh to help things along. Boredly the agent blew smoke tendrils toward the ceiling.

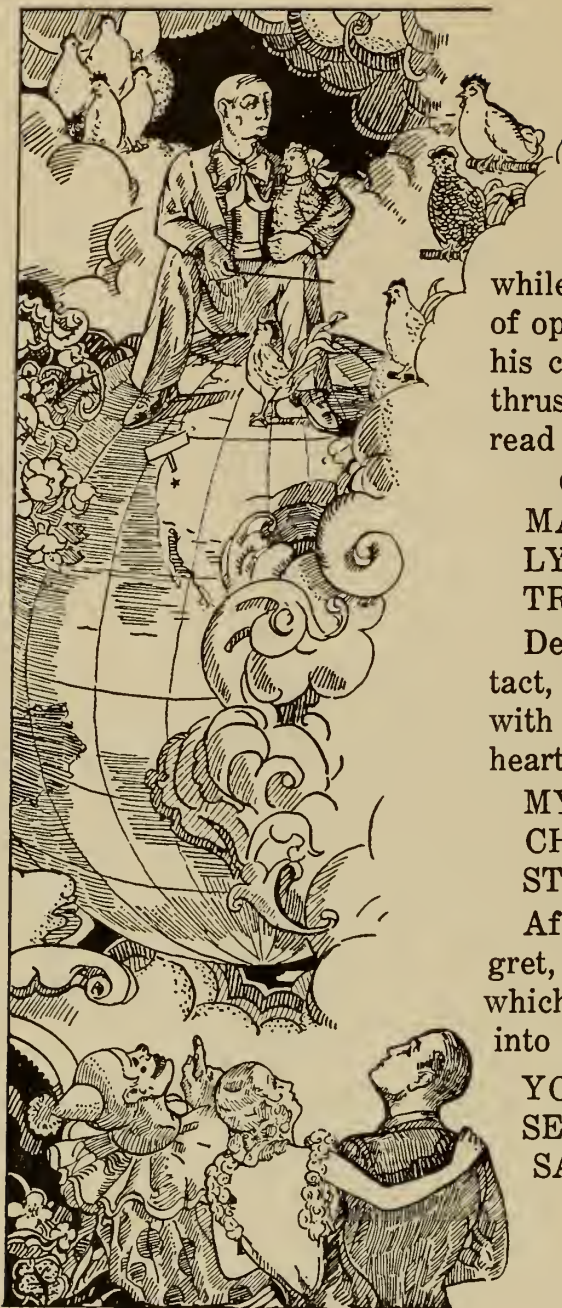
"Okay, Bill," he agreed after an impressive pause. "I'll arrange a try-out somewhere upstate, and we'll see what bookings we can grab."

"Get bookings toward Hollywood," Bill urged, "'cause I'm tellin' you one thing: those chickens of mine will make any picture they appear in."

The try-out date was set and the act reviewed. Bill got the coveted bookings, but not toward Hollywood. Weeks later, from Owosso, Michigan, he telegraphed a hopeful message to his agent:

CHICKENS IN SWELL SHAPE STOP BOOK TOWARD HOLLYWOOD

Receiving no answer, Bill swallowed his pride and played every vaudeville date in the northern time, began on the southern time, then cleaned up the central time. But he got no nearer the



film city than the huge buses marked Los Angeles which he continually saw from the train windows.

One day in his dressing room between shows, while he was lamenting the lack of opportunity for the career of his chickens, a telegram was thrust into his hands which read:

**CAN PLACE YOU AT
MAJOR STUDIO HOL-
LYWOOD AS ANIMAL
TRAINER**

Desiring to place his act intact, Bill stubbornly protested with a return message from his heart:

**MY EXPERIENCE WITH
CHICKENS LOST IF
STOP NOW**

After days of not a little regret, Bill received a telegram which sent his spirits whirling into numerous visions:

**YOU PLAY SALT LAKE,
SEATTLE, PORTLAND,
SAN FRANCISCO, CLOSE
IN LOS ANGELES
STOP CONTRACTS
FOLLOW**

CHICKENS

A night of elation followed. After the show, the animal trainer astonished the whole vaudeville bill with a large party. He made much whoopee and much boasting as to what he intended doing in Hollywood, how he meant to leave the circuit for pictures. He was through with the road.

"My picture contract's right there in that trunk!" Bill lied over and over again, banging a stately piece of baggage with a determined fist to emphasize his statements.

"Swell!" his friends repeated continually, as they drank his liquor freely.

"I'll say it's swell!" Bill widened his eyes hypnotically. "Listen, they've had horses in films, dogs, cats, birds, and snakes. But chickens have never had a break."

"Why, Bill!" a comic cracked. "You're forgettin' musical comedies. Nobody can get a break in Hollywood but chickens."

Day after day, as Bill played his last week at the Los Angeles Orpheum, he became apprehensive. Day after day went by without any motion-picture representative presenting his card at the stage door.

His tour at an end, he sought Hollywood agents for a possible "in" in the film game. Vague promises left him nauseated.

Funds grew lower, and he got down to a light diet. Despair seized him as he felt deep regret in not having accepted the engagement as animal trainer. Love for chickens had thwarted a possible career.

Finally living on coffee and cigarettes, he fed his poultry bread which he collected at night during long walks down dark alleys.

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

Then came a telegram from New York to a live Hollywood agent:

LOCATE BILL NOEL LETTER FOLLOWS

The letter implored the agent to intervene for a split commission. After quite a search, the local agent climbed a flight of rickety stairs to the trainer's meager lodgings.

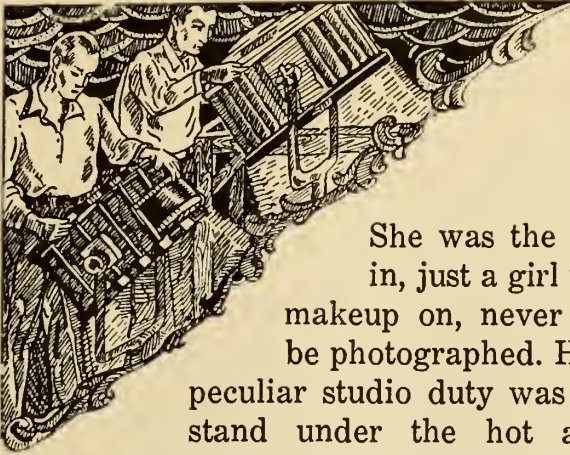
"How came you go hiding out with no telephone?" the agent said to be cheerful when Bill opened the door. "Got a swell job in sight for you. Metro is ready to start an animal picture. They want you to train some of their stock, and they want the chickens they saw when they caught your act down town at the Orpheum. How's that for luck?"

For a moment Bill's eyes widened with elation; then he relaxed, sheepishly pointing to a steaming pot on a gas burner.

"It's too late!" he groaned. "I just ate the act."



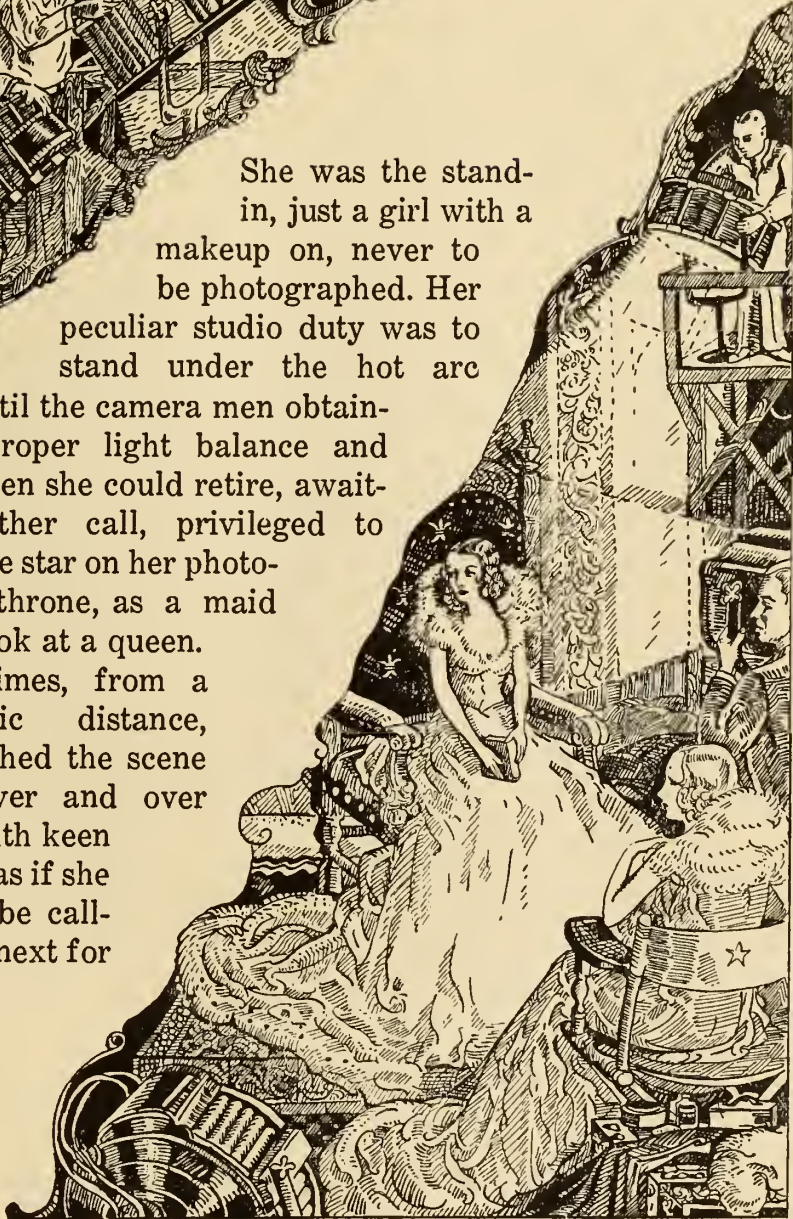
The Stand-In



She was the stand-in, just a girl with a makeup on, never to be photographed. Her peculiar studio duty was to stand under the hot arc

lights until the camera men obtained the proper light balance and focus; then she could retire, awaiting another call, privileged to watch the star on her photographic throne, as a maid might look at a queen.

Sometimes, from a diplomatic distance, she watched the scene taken over and over again, with keen interest, as if she were to be called upon next for



HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

talent. But that indulgence had its monotonous reaction, for she was only the stand-in, just a girl with a makeup on, never to be photographed.

During the long day she could look at a movie magazine and absorb the happy glamorous life the stars were supposed to live. Yet she remained as distant from it and Hollywood as any ambitious youth who might be reading the same publication in some obscure eastern village, for she was only the stand-in, just a girl with makeup on, never to be photographed.

Between scenes, if some noisy conference got under way, she could have a romp with the star's pet pooch, provided she did not cause it to bark. Or she could indulge in a whispered conversation with the double, or work out a cross-word puzzle, or sit and dream and dream—any number of things in fact, if like a chastised child she was seen and not heard.

But there was more freedom when the director called lunch. She could hurry to the counter, and by picking the proper stool, sit and watch the famous personages through the half-drawn curtains of the private dining room.

The rest of the hour she could saunter about the lot, four blocks square—a city in itself—and gaze at the strange make-believe scenery the carpenters and painters were creating to enhance new scenarios. As she trudged over the cobblestones of a foreign-looking square, there was the thrill of dreaming about the characters that would soon inhabit and then desert it.

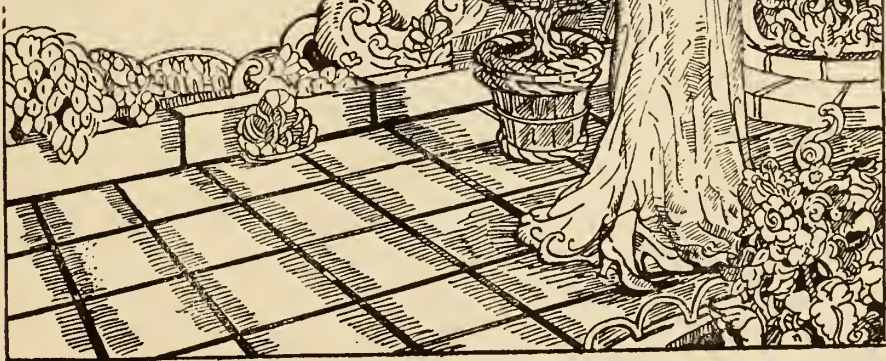
Also there were castles tall and imposing, inspiring to the imagination, deserted, with drawbridges broken, moats emptied, bombardment holes in the walls. A huge ocean liner, half cut in



two, as if in dry dock after some tragic disaster, lay waiting patiently for the next sea picture.

Streets upon streets ran hither and yon, seemingly architecturally perfect, of Dutch, French, Russian, English, and American styles. Miniature sections of New York and Chicago, with imposing bits of the elevated-train system in evidence, rested like a poetic deserted city. Sections of an Oriental port were arranged relative to cut-out skylines on an adjacent hill, and through the porthole of a battleship, Shanghai came to life.

As if half split by lightning a quaint



HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

church presented its best side for good camera shots. Vines rambled artfully over false brick, but real pigeons swarming about the belfry tower ensouled it.

Miniature lakes, with huge wave-machines, rested placidly for some author's command; and ponds with ducks and aristocratic-looking swans idly waited the scenario department's call to action.

Tanks for diving shots evidenced dry bottoms of tar paper warped by the blistering sun, while tall ladders and springing board gaped menacingly; and nearby, a real Red Cross hospital stood in its dignity, as if mothering the future action of the whole studio.

Cages housed various animals which cried for a trainer's generous ration. Innumerable stables sheltered everything from thoroughbreds to comical mules with sway backs. Salt, plaster, and mica covered a barn to represent the snow of winter.

All these things could be seen again and again during part of the noon hour, with new dreams and visions secretly stimulating her imagination. And on the way back to the stage, she could saunter down a garden walk where rows of bungalows for the stars made her wonder what elegance the walls enclosed. At last she could stop beside the bootblack's stand to share a bit of food with the comedy cat that played in so many pictures.

Arriving back on the set as commanded, at five minutes to one o'clock, to powder up so that the camera man wouldn't crab about a greasy-looking face to focus upon, she could sit in a favorite corner to watch the late arrivals groan under the weight of a heavy meal, stretch themselves, and languidly start preparations for the afternoon's work. Then she would wait and wait

STAND-IN

and wait for the assistant's call, feeling a sort of stigma, which there was no particular reason to allow, for everyone killed her with kindness. Yet she was only the stand-in, just a girl with a makeup on, never to be photographed.



The Studio Cat

The studio gates swung wide to admit a stately car. Disdaining the action, the studio cat jumped into the gateman's cushioned chair and sat like a king upon his throne. For a moment he wrestled with hate, then venom won. He lifted his percussant tail high into the air, and with a follow-through stroke to shame any golfer, gave it a quick nuts-to-you snap at the limousine housing the unpopular star.

Blackie felt better. This antipathy had continued ever since he had been borrowed from the gateman to appear in the kitchen scenes of a motion picture. Later, a few fan letters arrived, addressed to Blackie, the Studio Cat. Some of the stars on the lot had laughed at the idea of a cat getting fan mail, which made existence unbearable to Blackie. He would not go on the stages any more, but he would go under them. He would never act again, but he *would* snap his tail at the egotistical offenders.

He was a wise cat; he had seen plenty of changes on the lot in a few short years. No one had roamed the lot as long as he. They came and they went, made their mistakes as silly humans do, and were seen no more.

Even now, he could but lift an eye to the top of the administration building and see the manifestation of human stupidity.

Someone in charge had forgotten to turn the switch that extinguished the huge electric sign. It was past 9 a. m. Stockholders' money was being wasted while the sign blinked and flickered in the sunlight, spelling out Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer with intermittent flaring initials: M-G-M.

THE STUDIO CAT

With the utmost contempt, Blackie turned his attention to his morning titivation. First, he lifted his jet-black fur, with an eye for fleas, and then pasted it down with liquid artistry most amazing.

"Meow," called a restaurant cat from the Greasy Spoon Hash House across the street, and included the password.

She pushed her fat hulk through the iron bars of the gate and slunk along the casting-office wall, slowly giving herself a salt rub on the rough stucco surface. Then too there was another reason for tarrying. She really could not enter the sanctum of the regal studio cat without proper welcome. The studio cat wasn't exactly high hat, but his *hauteur* was occasionally cataphractic. And so the restaurant cat poised herself at a safe diplomatic distance from the gateman's chair, repeated the password, and sat on her haunches waiting patiently, blinking both eyes for needed occupation.

Presently, after giving himself a thorough caticure, Blackie pronounced a good-morning caterwaul in pleasant enough tones as to make the coveted invitation valid.

Approaching perfunctorily, the restaurant cat moved in front of the gateman's chair, salaamed like a courtier respecting the throne, and whispered for court information.

"How's tricks? Any new scandal?" she gossiped.

"Nothin' to chew on," Blackie replied as if bored. "There hasn't been a scandal in a hell of a while. Will Hays is very active again, you know, politics and all that. By the way, I'm going to do a little cleaning up of the studio on my own, tonight. I'm giving a banquet under stage four at midnight."

"Really? How nice."

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

"Yes, if you care to join, please say so at once. It will be a sit-down supper; so naturally I don't want an odd number. I'm not at all superstitious, but my guests, you know—I don't want thirteen."

"You said a mouthful!" The restaurant cat licked her chops. "Then I'll see you after twelve?" she punned and was sorry.

The studio cat rolled his eyes immorally, forcing the restaurant cat to leave his presence.

At nine the next morning, after a night of riotous debauchery, the cats sat in the same positions by the entrance gate, discussing the night's orgy in low-toned confidence.

The studio cat cast his good eye upward, and again noted the stupidity of human beings. The incandescent bulbs in the huge sign over the administration building were blinking uselessly in the broad daylight, spelling out Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer after each flash of the initials: M-G-M.

"Well, ol' thing," Blackie wisecracked to the restaurant cat, "M-G-M may mean Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to humans, but to me it means Mighty-Good-Mice."



Vanity

The case of Elbert Cummings was most peculiar.

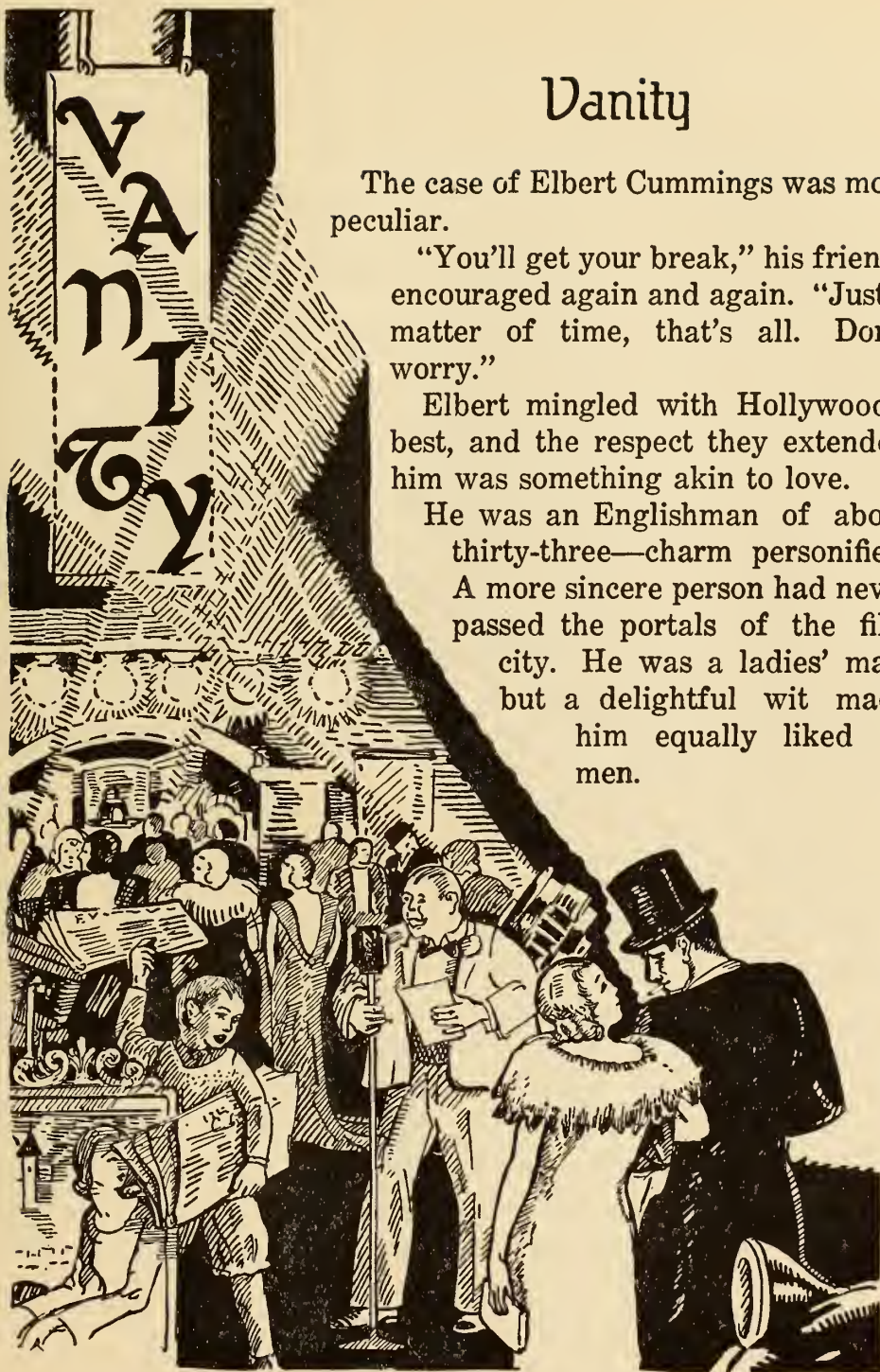
"You'll get your break," his friends encouraged again and again. "Just a matter of time, that's all. Don't worry."

Elbert mingled with Hollywood's best, and the respect they extended him was something akin to love.

He was an Englishman of about thirty-three—charm personified.

A more sincere person had never passed the portals of the film city.

He was a ladies' man, but a delightful wit made him equally liked by men.



HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

"How does Elbert do it?" was often asked by the skeptical. "He does only small bits and doesn't work much. Where does he get the money to hang on in pictures?"

"He's swell," was invariably the answer. "He's probably got a dinky income, and has a crazy yen for acting."

Though Elbert hated himself for it, he carried a profound secret. It was a case of life or death to him; so he didn't know what to do about it.

Wherever he went, he always arrived with a present of some sort for his hostess. But sometime during the evening, as opportunity afforded, he would purloin some object of value from her house, converting it into cash by mail in another city.

At last a night of nights came to lift Elbert's weary soul out of the mediocrity of time. A picture was to be previewed in which he had an excellent part. Betty Harlow was giving a large party in his honor.

All during the filming of the picture, everyone had indulged in thrusting goodnatured jests in his direction. But each inwardly felt that the jinx had been lifted, that in the future something might be expected from Elbert in the nature of fine screen portrayals.

At Betty Harlow's there was the buz-buz of sincere conversation, the good feeling which accompanies true regard. Quite the center of things, Elbert was happy. His hostess was happy too, for he had showered her with flowers by messenger, and arrived with his opera hat housing a corsage of orchids which he extracted as a magician does his rabbits.

"Wear them for me, Betty," he pleaded charmingly. "This

VANITY

is my coming out. So you must be my motion-picture godmother and launch your *filleul* properly.”

Laughter rang against the walls, over cocktails, over a gorgeous dinner table, over coffee in the drawing room; then suddenly faded entirely out.

Elbert's presents were forgotten. Betty's mind became filled with vexation over a mislaid vanity case, a wonderful example of the jeweler's craft. Its platinum surface was broken with square-cut diamonds which reflected the blood of a gorgeous ruby.

“It's got to be found—or else!” Betty demanded of her maid in tones for the whole house to hear.

A jolly atmosphere was clouded with tragedy. Guests stood waiting to depart, embarrassed, fumbling with hats and capes in an effort to keep occupied. Eyes met eyes with wondering expressions.

“The dirty thief!” mumbled by Betty, had dampened congenial conversation.

As Betty paired her guests, sending them to their respective cars, everyone spoke in whispers. Then gay-colored motors sped to the preview with funereal-looking passengers.

Arc lights, maneuvered by electricians, splashed the theater building with colorful and criss-cross patterns of brilliance. Long ropes formed a lane from the curb to the entrance, through which celebrities passed a gaping populace on a soft runner of carpet. As a jolly master of ceremonies announced each name from a loud speaker, hearty applause proclaimed the popularity of a king or queen of the House of the Silver Screen.

A Hollywood world *premiere* was in progress.

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

The low cadence of conversation filled the theater before the overture; but Betty Harlow's party of twenty-two arranged itself without smiles or *repartie* from the hostess. The lost vanity had cast an ominous spell which compelled everyone to sit like a mourner. Only Elbert Cummings smiled.

Whether his smile was real or not, only the gods knew. He was meditating, not a little, on why such a wealthy person as Betty would spoil her own reputation, and an evening for such a distinguished party, over a mislaid vanity. Then his meditation shifted from affluent to poverty-stricken humans and his own penny existence. Once again he hated the day that he first conceived the idea of purloining. Of course, he reasoned sincerely, if this picture should make a change in the course of his career, he might forgive himself for the past, and forget—

A blare of trumpets vibrated life into his soul.

The orchestra struck up an inspiring march. The leaden party responded into a union of interest. As the picture faded in, the lost vanity faded out of their minds.

Heavy applause rang against the theater walls. As each star and featured player received the plaudits from friends and admirers, Elbert sat motionless, hoping.

Happily awaiting his first appearance in the picture, he speculated on just how much applause he might receive. Friends and acquaintances had boosted and encouraged him for so long that now it was all to be as much a part of their success as his. Many had voiced it in so many words.

It suddenly occurred to Elbert that he might be called upon for a speech. Rapidly his mind started formulating a short message of thanks for friendly encouragement which had evidenced more confidence than he had in himself.

VANITY

To an enthusiastic, brilliant audience of first-nighters, the picture gradually unreeled its action and sound with colorful elegance, assuring its future success.

Elbert grew nervous with the moments. He shifted about, squirmed, and grew pale. As each foot of film reflected the countenance of other performers, his heart shrank and a feeling of nausea left him weak.

He wasn't wondering now how good he might be in his part, nor how he would be acclaimed. He was wondering how deep in the picture he was to make his first appearance, and how much footage he might possess after he did make an entrance.

Reel after reel passed, and sequence after sequence blended into one another until at last the cold, bitter truth hit at his heart like a spear with death-like poison on its end. He became fully cognizant that he was not to have a good part, a nice part, or even a small part. He was not to be seen at all. His role had been completely eliminated from the story.

Humiliated beyond endurance, his heart cried for a quick departure. There could be no possible way in which to meet the glances of pity for him when the lights came full up again. No amount of effort could erase the expression that would be imbedded in his face. With a low mumbled apology to the lady on his right, he pulled himself together and slunk unsteadily up the dark aisle toward the foyer.

The fresh air of the outer lobby had a reviving effect, but bystanders stared so strangely that he hurried on like a wounded animal.

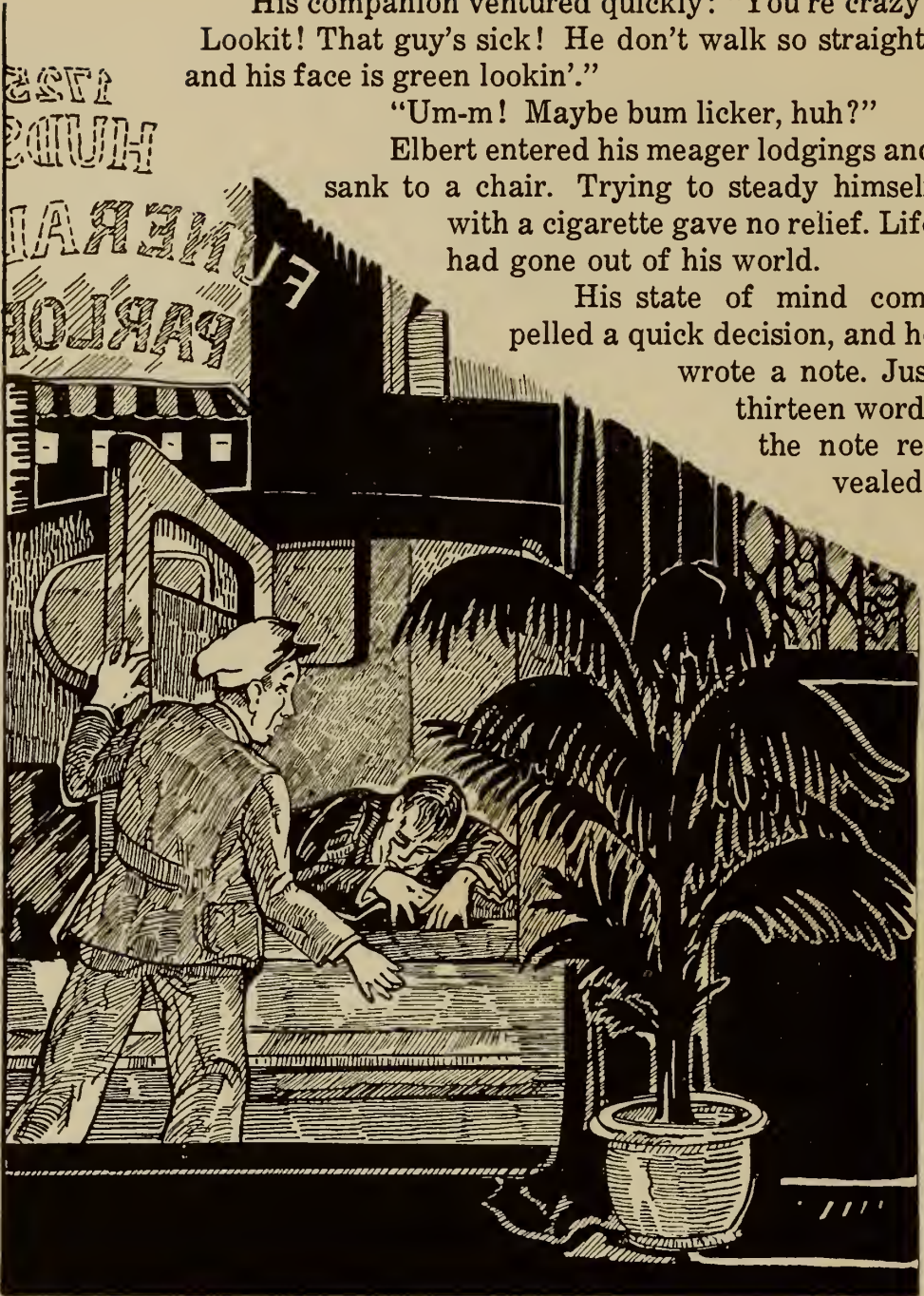
"There goes Elbert Cummin's," a newsboy stammered. "Musta been a bum pitcher, he's walkin' out on it."

His companion ventured quickly: "You're crazy! Lookit! That guy's sick! He don't walk so straight, and his face is green lookin'."

"Um-m! Maybe bum licker, huh?"

Elbert entered his meager lodgings and sank to a chair. Trying to steady himself with a cigarette gave no relief. Life had gone out of his world.

His state of mind compelled a quick decision, and he wrote a note. Just thirteen words the note revealed.



V A N I T Y

“I take this method so that the
real thief may never be known.”

Wearily he shuffled through the night to Betty Harlow's home and laid a package at her door. After ringing the bell, he darted behind some shrubbery in the garden.

Like one who has untangled the last thread of a complicated knot, he experienced a warm, grateful feeling when he saw the maid pick up the package and close the door.

At the corner drug store, Elbert thumbed a telephone book for an address which he wrote on his personal card. When he emerged to the street, he handed the card to a taxi driver as if it were too great an effort to speak any more.

Some minutes later, the taxi driver pulled at his brakes, lighted the dome light, and announced:

“Number 1725, sir.”

When there was no response, the driver alighted and opened the door. A quick flash of understanding surged through him when he found Elbert Cummings crumpled in a heap upon the car floor. With a shudder, he turned toward number 1725 and saw purple and gray drapes framing a large window with a single palm plant. By the palm plant, a ghost-green electric sign spelled: HUDSON FUNERAL PARLORS.



Sour Puss

He was a freckled-faced little shaver with a large nose which gave him a complex long before he knew the meaning of the word.

"Aw, why do they have to call me Sour Puss, Mom?" he confided one day to his mother. "I can't stand it any more. Someday I'm goin' to run away from this town."

"Now don't talk such nonsense," his mother consoled.

"I am! You'll see. Why, it's always Sour Puss this, and Sour Puss that. They make me sick! It ain't no name fer anybody."



SOUR PUSS

"Don't you fret. Let them call you what they want."

"But I *am* ugly, and I know it."

"Why, you're not! You just have rough-hewn features."

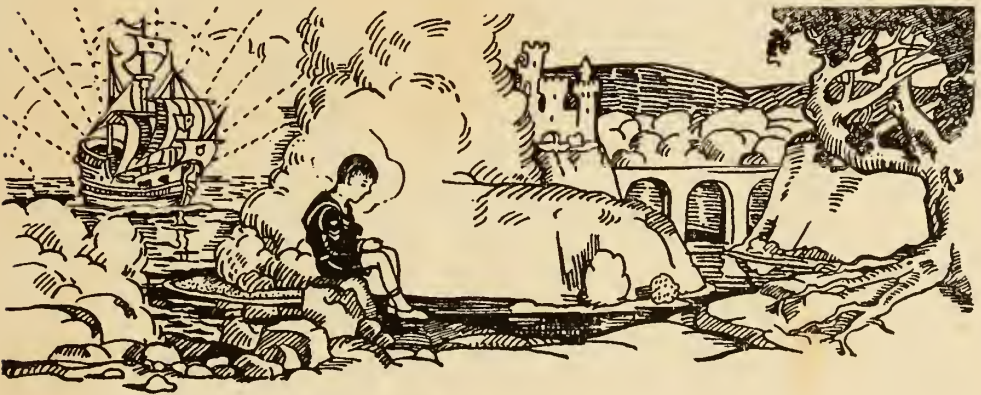
"Well, why don't they call me Micky, or Pal, or Slim, or any ol' thing? But Sour Puss—that's terrible, Mom!"

"It's just a nickname. One of these fine days you'll wake up and find that they don't call you that any more. It just won't fit. Now run along to the party and have a good time. Won't you do that for mother?"

Noncommittally he bounded out of the house.

He went to the party, but he didn't venture inside. For a while, he watched the gay activities from a knot hole in the barn. When the afternoon waned and the shadows fell, the party moved indoors. Then he circled the grounds like a spy, and from a great oak tree on the front lawn, watched the candles flare through the windows.

Neither the gayety, the dancing, the banquet that followed, nor the strawberry ice cream with chocolate cake five layers high



HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

could tempt him into an entrance. Instead, he climbed to the top of the oak and peered down through the thin foliage. With a broken jackknife, he carved a heart in a limb and cut his initials deep, together with those of the girl whom he would have liked to be sitting beside at the party.

Ugly and uninteresting to his companions, he finished high school and entered college; but from the moment his new acquaintances laid eyes upon him, he was dubbed Sour Puss, as surely as if a letter had preceded him, describing the insignia.

A marked sensitiveness caused him to fail in athletics. He failed in almost everything which called for a public appearance, excepting the college band.

He loved the band. It allowed him the privilege of attending the proms without mingling with the revelers; for he could never bring himself to impose his presence on any young lady for the close embrace of a dance. When the band master found out that he could sing, he was given crazy antics to perform during the refrains, being introduced as their *basso buffo*.

One day a lovely girl surprised him.

“Won’t you take part in our class play?” she pleaded.

For days he was thrilled with rehearsing his part, but it reacted like poison when he realized that he was looked upon as the reincarnation of Cyrano de Bergerac.

He played his part too well. Some practical joker got past the editor of the college paper with an article captioned “The Genius of Sour Puss,” which cut to the quick.

Instantly the student body coined a gag. The word *genius* became a campus expression to be accompanied with a wry smile and the wiggling of forehead muscles.

SOUR PUSS

The contest was on.

A hand over the nose indicated great length. Distorted eyes and tongues in cheeks aided everyone in declaiming his or her features to be the worst Sour Puss in captivity.

Cartoons became the fad. Drawings like ugly valentines appeared on sidewalks, on blackboards, and in the fly leaves of textbooks. The lavatory walls were decorated, suggesting the first efforts of a new art class.

Human endurance came to an end. The ugly duckling packed his belongings in two suitcases and made a surreptitious departure in the kindness the night extended.

For a while it was tough sledding, but he finally allied himself with a third-class band and toured the country in vaudeville.

Bookings were partly canceled, and finally the little band was stranded in Los Angeles. An out-of-the-way cafe in Hollywood saved a dozen boys from the bread line, but the duckling was happy. For the first time he noticed that his antics in the specialties were appreciated instead of just tolerated.

"Hotcha!" the band manager exclaimed one day as he flashed a contract to appear in a motion picture. "What a break! Not much money, but look at the publicity we'll get. It'll sure put the band on the map!"

A few short weeks later the members of the band stood on the rear end of an east-bound train, yelling mirthful, farewell statements to a lost sheep on the platform.

"Bye, ol' clown!" the manager shouted as the train rolled away. "Stay away from them Hollywood dames, Sour Puss!"

The boy hadn't heard any of the kidding. Unconsciously he waved them on their way, with a secret in his bosom which

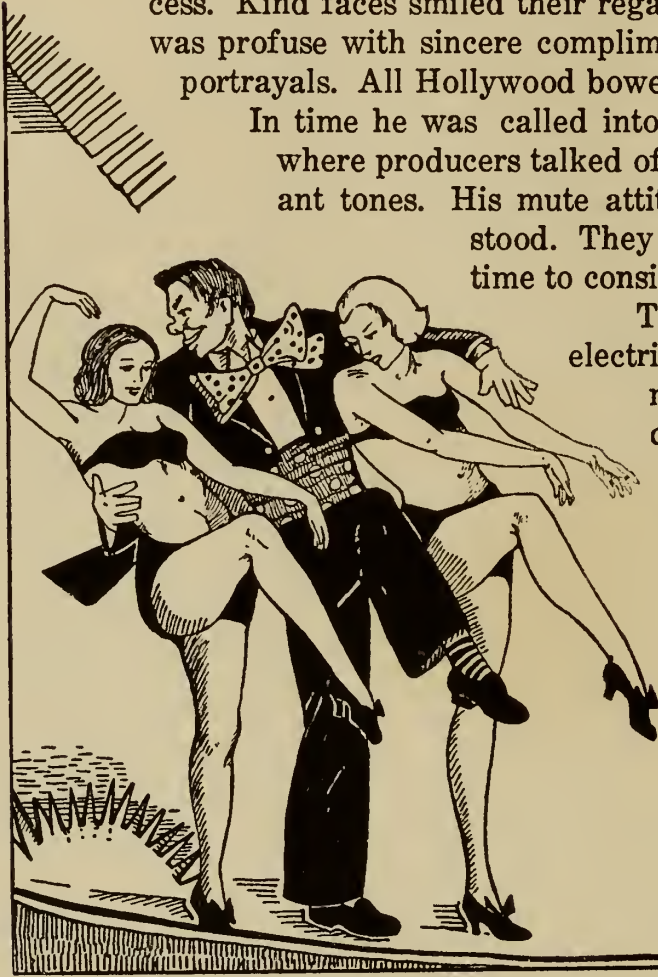
HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

expelled all else. A deported actor had left a vacancy which gave him a break he could not yet appreciate.

After a second picture, he experienced the ecstasy of success. Kind faces smiled their regard, and the fair sex was profuse with sincere compliments concerning his portrayals. All Hollywood bowed to another comet.

In time he was called into a beautiful office where producers talked of a contract in pleasant tones. His mute attitude was misunderstood. They begged him to take time to consider.

The next conference electrified him quite as much. The former contract had been torn up. A new document was spread before his startled eyes, the duration of which was five years, and the consideration over a million dollars.



SOUR PUSS

He signed with the producer's gold pen and a shaking hand.

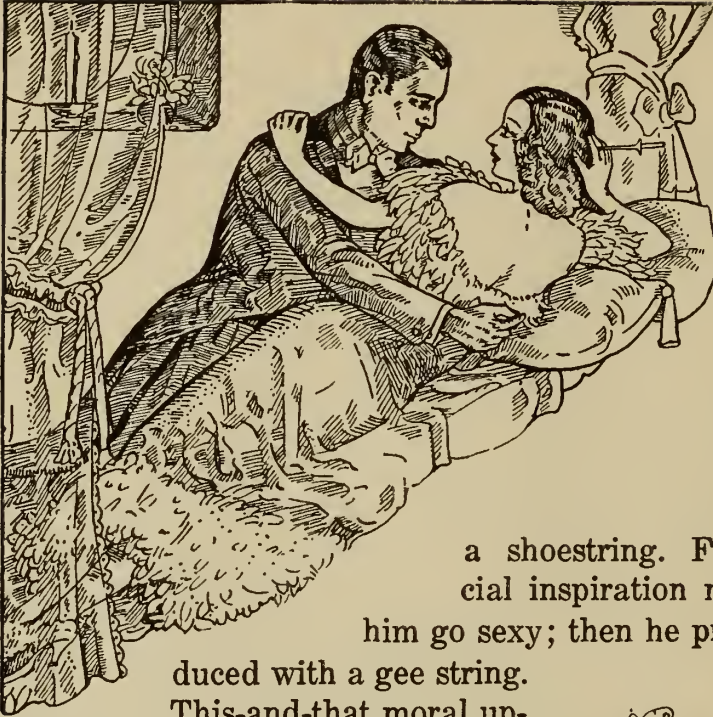
After a luncheon in his honor, he strolled down Hollywood Boulevard in a mental stupor. His feet guided him into a telegraph office, and his hand addressed a message to his mother. Afraid to express himself openly, he finally wrote:

SWELL LETTER FOLLOWS

Hurrying to his lodgings, he spent an hour writing the longest letter he had ever composed. Then he stuffed it into a mail box with postage enough to urge Uncle Sam into speed.

"And what do you think, Mom?" the last line stated. "They don't call me Sour Puss any more. I got a new name. They call me comedian."





Tarzan Clutches

Max Steinbalm became successful producing Western pictures on

a shoestring. Financial inspiration made

him go sexy; then he pro-

duced with a gee string.

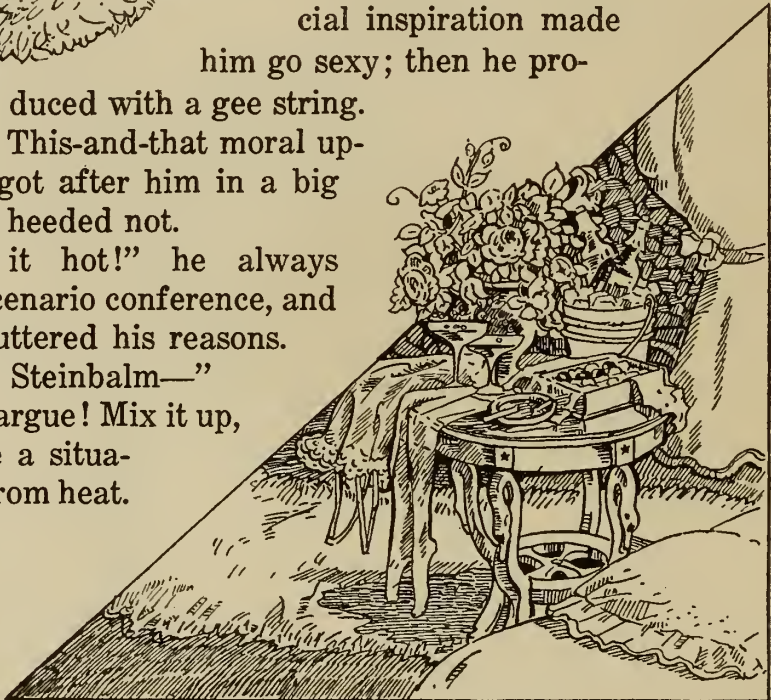
This-and-that moral up-

lift society got after him in a big way, but he heeded not.

"Gimme it hot!" he always urged at a scenario conference, and excitedly stuttered his reasons.

"But, Mr. Steinbalm—"

"Doncha argue! Mix it up, boys. Make a situation steam from heat.



TARZAN CLUTCHES

Ven yuh make it sexy, make it sexy, an' I don' mean riddles! Dis is de age of hot mamas an' varm-up papas. It's de boxhoffice vot writes de ticket of de nation. Since de vorld var, everythin' is boom-boom, hotsy-totsy, an' knee-action."

"But we have to be a little careful, Max," his staff chief explained ruefully at every special meeting.

"Careful!" Max raved. "Careful from vot yuh tell me! Yuh vant ve should make it failure from hunger? Make vit guts a situation, I tell yuh! Make de pichers ring true from heart appeal. No afternoon dresses. Make it situations vot show a man makin' hot love to a voman in negligee. An' no pajama business. Give 'em a quick look at something nifty. Now give me a look," he always concluded when ready for an exit, and winked a huge financial eye.

"I tell you what we better do, boys," the scenario chief began, with censorship in his mind. "We better try and be more artful—you know—imply more."

"Dot's it!" Max screamed elatedly. "Apply more."

The chief grimaced. "You don't quite understand me, Mr. Steinbalm."

With hand on the door knob, Max advised, "Sure I do! Dot's good fellas. Make it hot from pepper," and closed the door quickly in order to have the last word.

Weeks passed.

Another picture was released, brandishing its sensationalism before the moralists. And as a red flag incenses a bull, they rushed to the attack.

A letter from the Hays organization demanded some atten-

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

tion. Max was still adamant, however, and did plenty of storming before a vacillating staff.

"De Hays! De Hays!" he shouted. "Always you are talkin' about de Hays office vanting us to be more so. Piff! I tink you have gone softing. I esk yuh how can I sell a picher vitout he-men and she-goils? Does de Hays organization pay mine losses. No. But de dictates from de office makes it look I should make a man a pansy, an' de goils shouldn't be a cling to de vine any more. Oye, am I seek. Some states make it a censorship for an oncoming mama to knit up little yarn shoes. Udder states von't let 'er glence at an oncoming calendar. Oye, am I seek! Vot is dis? Absitively I'm blotto!"

"But, Mr. Steinbalm—"

"Don't interpret me! I'm de von who is hot! Jus' enswering all my questions vit a *positive* or a *yes*, quick! Very vel den."

"But, Max," the chief pleaded, "this letter only suggests that they're against these hot Tarzan clutches between men and women."

"Ha! Ve should fake it our pichers vit dummies? Enswering me dot again vit some quick no's. Do ve vant synth—"

Failing with the word *synthetic*, Max used *fake* again, and strutted up and down the room to exemplify his financial wound. When he said "Piff!" the chief knew it was time for him to say something.

"Then you think—"

"I tink it's hokay by me to take the bull by de teeth. It's such as dot should make de picher business no more a racket. Ooo, am I seek! Censors have no financial appreciation." He moaned as if he had invented the moan and said, "I rest my case!" like

TARZAN CLUTCHES

a great lawyer. He sat for a brief moment, then rushed to the door for a dramatic exit, got balanced, and concluded: "Huh! No more Tarzan clutches, hey! Vel, ve ain't in such a jem vit our pichers full of boxhoffice. I say write me stories it should wrack vit life. Vot yuh tink, I should fade out on Cupid necking Jackie Cooper? Look, ve get hotter and hotter! Ve use clutches like dot snake in Vild Cargo."

He slammed the door, then opened it again, and winked coyly to show respect for his staff.

But Max was forced to listen to outside demands. His hot situations brought hot reactions of a different sort. After many hot letters from hot mothers (not mamas) and hot fathers (not papas), he listened to hot commands from his superiors in the business. Somewhat subdued, he ordered a special scenario conference in his office.

An anxious staff assembled itself, ready to listen to what promised to be nothing short of a Gettysburg address. With the spirit of Will Hays within him, Max Steinbalm rose to express his desires.

"Boys," he began solemnly, "I have jus' had a nice chat vit Mr. Vil Hays. He talked tuh me like a pel, a bosom pel. An' believe me he's a good feller. Jus' like us. Boys, he's right! Vot dis country needs is uplift, vit a capital UP. Ideas tuh tink about vot's on de upward ten—" Failing with the word *tendency*, he carried on with *road*. "The upper road. Ven a picher gets tuh de end, it should be strong from uplift—downright reform. From now on dose are de clean ethics vot is de acme from us."

The chief started a little applause. The rest of the staff thought it better to join in quickly.

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

But Max lifted his hand like a statesman, to neutralize the plaudits. The spirit of Will Hays pervaded him. After smacking his lips, he posed for conclusion concerning his new moral policy.

"Now in dis new story you are composin'," he began sincerely, "I'll stand for de goil in de picher shootin' de man an' stealin' all his money, but she must still remain, at de end, a nice goil."



A Jump into Prominence

She lay dead in a deep gully in the Hollywood Hills. A tourist party had sighted her body from the road and notified the police.

Before the police arrived, newspaper and magazine photographers were taking snaps of her deformed body from every angle.

The official investigation revealed proof that the despondent girl had had a six-months motion-picture contract, but had never appeared in a single production. Yet black flaring newspaper headlines read: ACTRESS JUMPS TO DEATH.

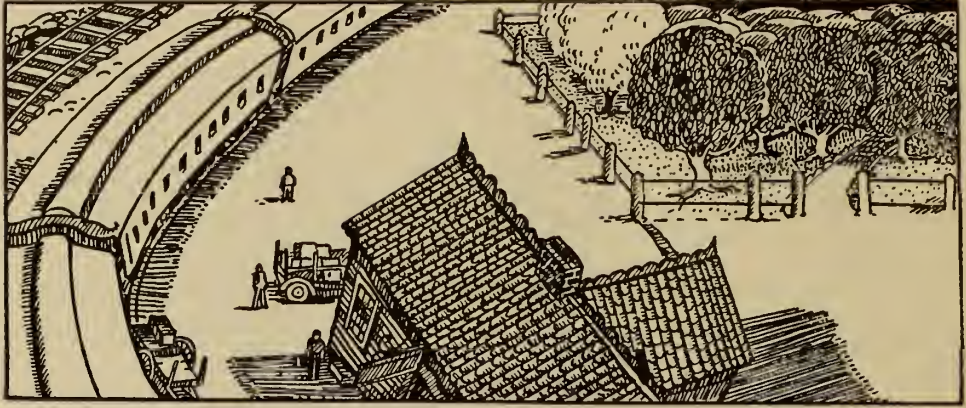
A year before, there had been a beauty contest in a small town in Iowa. Nellie Bryan had won. She had boarded a train amid cheers, jests, and good-luck banalities from the home-towners.

The bridge-club boys and girls had tied a streamer on each side of the train coach. Large lettering circused her tour to the Coast, proclaiming: CALIFORNIA, HERE COMES NELLIE BRYAN.

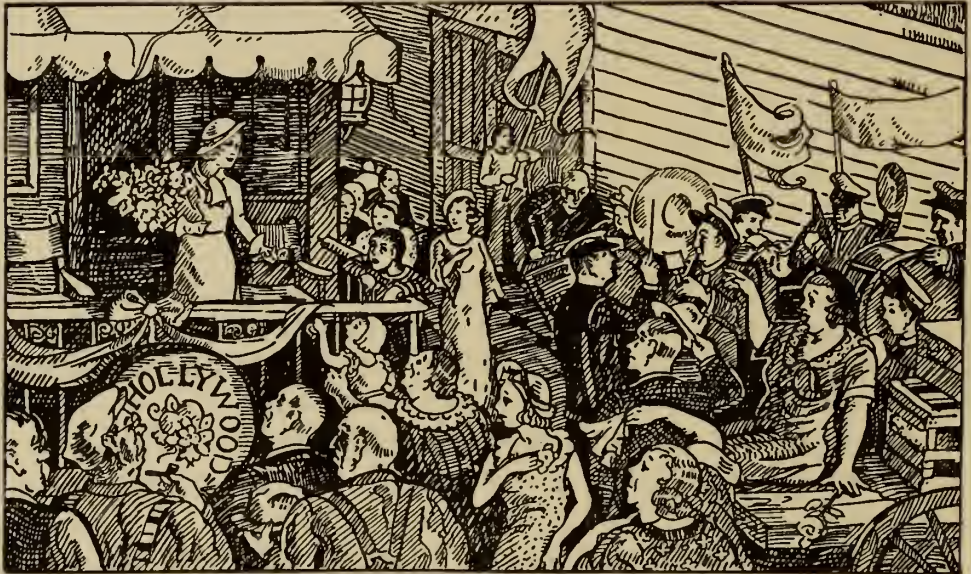
Many photographs were taken of the lovely girl, standing on the rear platform of the train with the mayor, the minister, and civic denizens. The photographs were spread artfully across the early edition of the *Evening Eagle*, which included a lengthy article, explaining the six-months contract that Nellie Bryan had won. Seventy-five dollars a week, with options ranging up to three hundred fifty.

On that eventful day, the train pulled out, with the town

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clowns running after it, whooping it up in grand shape for Nellie. Sparing no expense, they had sent to the city for confetti. They used corn and rice to fill in with, and the moving train left a station platform resembling a winter snow.



A JUMP INTO PROMINENCE

Long after the rest had departed, Nellie's mother stood alone, with eyes toward the west. An inspiration forced her into the station where she wrote a short letter so that it would be picked up by the very next train to the Coast. In the excitement, she had forgotten to tell her daughter one or two things which were very important.

When Mrs. Bryan arrived home, she became aware that Nellie's father had got tipsy on the left-over punch from the farewell party. Retiring to her room, she cried a little, then wrote part of another letter which would be sent west the following day. And every second day thereafter, a letter was dropped into the box, bearing Nellie's Hollywood address.

Hollywood was fun—at first. Nellie saved a great deal of her weekly salary too, and finally did the noble thing of aiding, with a good-sized loan, a feminine friend in dire need.

The money rolled in regularly, but Nellie was mentally disturbed. She was never cast in any production, not even in a small, unimportant part. Kind executives continually explained that nothing of importance had been written in which she could be used.

However, the publicity department was active. They had her photographed in gorgeous costumes, in furs, exotic gowns, and frocks of every description, with trunks, handbags, novelties, and divers advertising. And invariably there would be the full description of the contest she had won. Her beauty became famous. Her name was often split in print. Nellie (Exotic) Bryan, they called her.

Six months passed quickly. As she had never been seen on the screen, the options attached to her contract so securely when

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

she signed them were ignored. In a mental fog, Nellie left the studio with little money and a sting in her heart.

Weeks passed. Months passed. She never did get work.

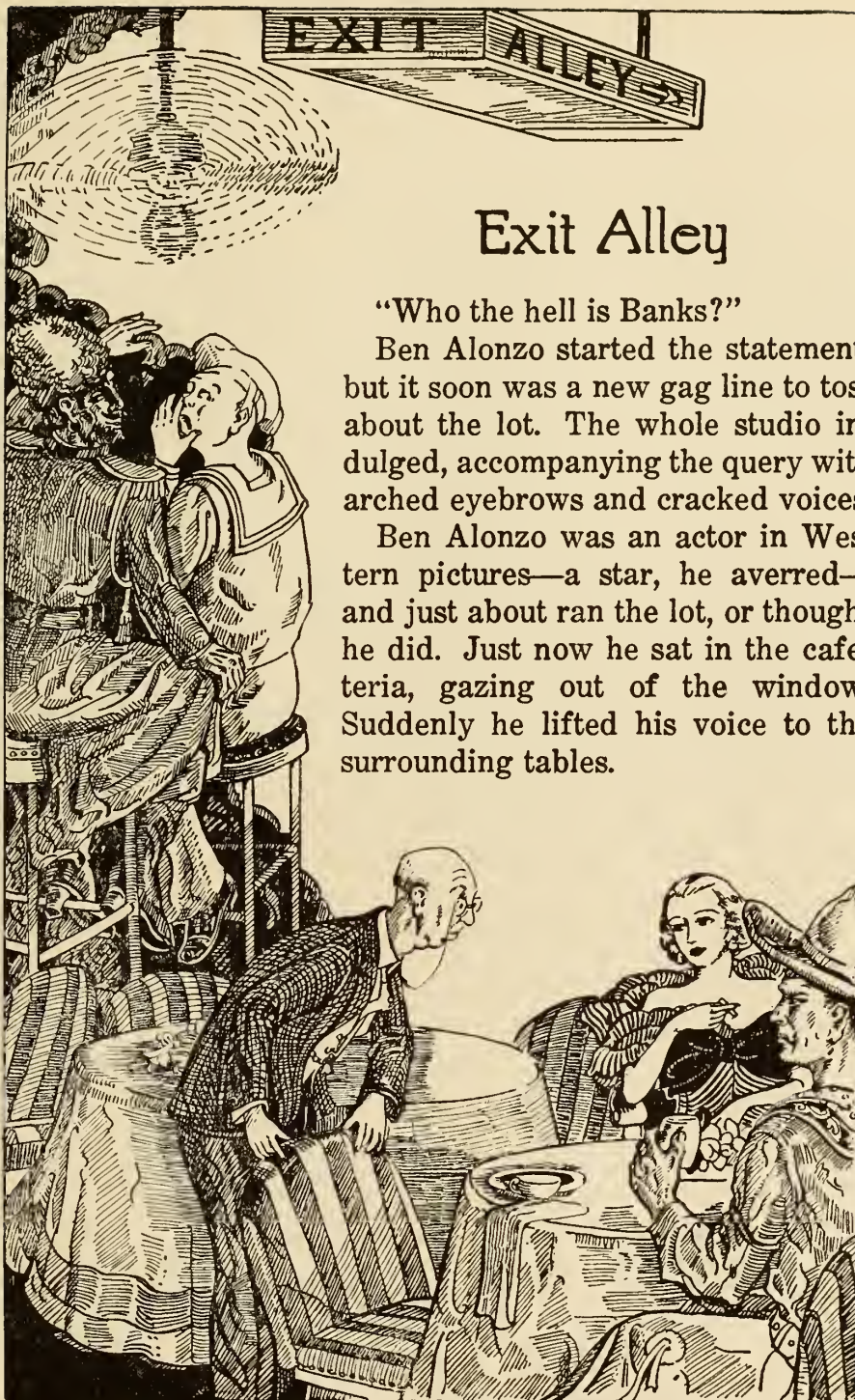
Desperately seeking the friend to whom she had made the generous loan, she finally secured a possible address in New York City.

After two letters had been returned, she spent days in trying to obtain the right address of her friend. Finally she succeeded, but not until her funds had diminished to nothing at all, leaving her with an aching stomach that vibrated with frightening pains.

A note left in her hotel room explained that she would not return, knowing she was to be locked out. The note proved that she had never informed her parents or friends back in Iowa of her plight. "Stay away from Hollywood," was her terse statement of advice. The note ended with expressions of great disgust for human nature, particularly for a friend who was no friend in need.

But she was wrong. The day after she jumped from the cliff, the hotel clerk handed the chief of police a letter addressed to Nellie. The friend in New York City had sent her a postoffice money order for several hundred dollars.





Exit Alley

"Who the hell is Banks?"

Ben Alonzo started the statement, but it soon was a new gag line to toss about the lot. The whole studio indulged, accompanying the query with arched eyebrows and cracked voices.

Ben Alonzo was an actor in Western pictures—a star, he averred—and just about ran the lot, or thought he did. Just now he sat in the cafeteria, gazing out of the window. Suddenly he lifted his voice to the surrounding tables.

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"Hey, fellas," he urged, "here comes Dizzy! The rib is on! Give it to him plenty." He nudged the extra girl by his side, explaining: "Watch for the fun! This guy's a crazy lug. He looks like the monkey Darwin wrote about."

"What's it all about?" the girl in Fatima costume inquired.

"That's right. You've been away on location too long to know. Well, there's somethin' amongst us. Get a load of the wizened bit of humanity that's makin' an entrance."

It was a hot sultry day in July. The restaurant was the coolest spot which actors, managers, grips, electricians, gaffers, and cameramen could find. Whether finished with food or not, they selfishly lingered at the tables under the breeze of the electric fans.

Mr. Banks entered the cafe, remained by the cashier's desk a moment while casting his eyes newfoundlandly about, imploring courtesy from any finished diner. His little stature of five foot two sagged in the middle, and his starched collar wilted with the moments as he moved his straw hat mechanically before his face.

"There'll be loads of laughs in a minute," Ben whispered to the Fatima girl. "It's a riot to watch him every day at lunch time. He's terribly nearsighted. When he spots a chair and goes for it, one of the gang sneaks over and sits in it."

"What does he do?"

"Oh, he apologizes all over the place for his mistake, wipes his glasses, and tries again. Then we repeat on him. Sometimes he makes an exit to cover up his embarrassment."

"What makes you think that that's so much fun? It's cruel!"

A sudden bit of laughter went ceilingward, mixing strange-

EXIT ALLEY

ly with the noise of purring fans. Mr. Banks, hardly realizing that the joke was on him, moved down the lane of tables.

"Look," Ben laughed, "the ol' buzzard is headed for us. Watch!"

"No, you don't!" the extra girl protested, grabbing at Ben.

She was much too late. The nearsighted little man approached the table like one in a game of blind man's buff, while Ben Alonzo did all he could to confuse the poor fellow by continually shifting from one chair to the other.

"You may sit by me," the girl welcomed, spoiling the fun for the pranksters.

While scanning the menu, Mr. Banks allowed one eye to slip by and refocus upon the lovely blonde in Fatima costume who had been so pleasant. Then his nearsightedness embarrassed him again. By her side he saw the figure of a famous actor in full Western costume.

"Why," he gushed, "aren't you Ben Alonzo, our Western hero?"

Ben smiled his saccharine best, which he always used when discovered, then introduced his girl friend.

"My name is Banks," the little man informed modestly. "Harry E. My wife's a collector. May I thrill her with your photograph, Mr. Alonzo, autographed?"

To catch his studio capacity, Ben said that he would drop the photograph by his office. But Mr. Banks concluded that it was better if he came to the dressing room to pick it up.

"Funny, dizzy specimen," Ben remarked, as he watched the newcomer pay his check and exit to the lot. "I'll bet he's a lousy

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

writer and has an office up in Exit Alley, and is plenty ashamed and burnt up about it. Hah! Up in The Cages.”

“What’s all that?”

“Why, the most depressing row of offices in Hollywood. Four flights up in an abandoned stage, no water, no light, no heat, no carpet—nothin’ but a chair and a desk. They place a poor soul up there when they’re sore at him, and want him to break his own contract by walkin’ out. It’s acquired the name of Exit Alley or The Cages.”

“Aw, cruel!”

“Cruel but sure. No one can stand that treatment long. They usually give in and go walkin’ down the road like a yellow dog. You know, somethin’ tells me to find out just who he is. Hah!” he sneered, “maybe he’s some distant relative who knows where part of the bury is bodied. Funny though, this guy seems to be on the way *out* before he gets *in*.”

“You were terribly rude to him.”

“Think so?” Ben grinned, but made a decision, evidencing a worried face.

A little later Ben promised to hand out some very fine scotch in return for sound information.

The gateman mumbled to the telephone girl. The telephone girl accepted the standing invitation of the studio manager to lunch, surprising him. The studio manager asked the business manager. The business manager asked the comptroller. Under pretext of department information, the comptroller asked the general manager.

“Why, he came out from the New York office,” the potentate informed. “I think they must have been under some light

EXIT ALLEY

obligation to him, because an accompanying letter explained that he was to be our Humanitarian Investigator. Imagine that? There's nothing that N. Y. office won't think of to create a new job. Well, maybe they're right," he agreed after meditating a moment. "We're always having plenty of grief with animal-welfare organizations. Anyway, I figured he don't need any swell office to be Humanitarian Investigator. So I shoved him up in Exit Alley."

Through mysterious channels the information filtered back to Ben Alonzo, who spread it with the glee of a schoolboy. From then on, the term Humanitarian Investigator was whispered with mock seriousness.

But information also filtered through other channels just as fast. After two short weeks something tragic happened.

A lengthy notice was pasted on the large blackboard in the administration building. A copy was tacked in the cafeteria, and carbons were sent to the heads of departments. It explained tersely that two weeks from date there would be a replacement of the general manager, the business manager, the studio manager, the comptroller, the telephone operator, and the gateman. The order was signed: Harry E. Banks.

The news traveled lightning-like that Mr. Banks was from Wall Street, representing the New York office.

Much sought after, Mr. Banks had his hand wrung violently and wrung again with proffered congratulations. At lunch hour each day in the restaurant, everyone smiled his best. Fawning souls would often rise and offer the little-big man a chair, hoping he might sit a moment with mere employees. But Mr. Banks always passed on, shedding a certain smile of his own, walking

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

the length of the cafe to the private dining room, leaving a wake of shivers behind, the shivers extending to bank accounts.

"By the way," the Fatima girl asked Ben Alonzo, "did Mr. Banks ever come to your dressing room for that autographed photograph he requested?"

"No," Ben gulped, "and I'm worried as hell about it."



Georgeous

Flash was a high-powered publicity man. Hardly anyone knew his last name. Anyway it was seldom voiced. He was called the maker of stars. Lived up to his name too, excepting one particular prophecy. Liked by everyone, he moved into any room with a hot-cha-cha expression, snapped his fingers, asked, "Have you heard this one?" and the fun began.

In the throes of a lively New York City sojourn, he entered a drawing room one day at cocktail time and began: "Hot-ch—" But he left the last syllable forever unexpressed. Standing captivated by a striking platinum blonde, he mumbled: "China-blue eyes." With top speed, he found her name to be Navine Hayden.

"Georgeous!" he whispered after his introduction.

Exploitation details flashed like lightning through his mind as he basked in the intoxication of her presence. Later, on a moonlit veranda, he emphasized and amplified his ideas.

"I'm christening you Georgeous from now on," he assured her, and in a delicious fog of fancy, prophesied: "I'm putting you over with that."

The world for which he considered himself fitted had suddenly started paying him dividends.

"Yep. Georgeous!" he pronounced meditatively, as his mind shot months ahead. "Little lady, we go travelin' from this moment!"

Spellbound, he watched her china-blue eyes, watched the luscious lips chatter on to him as if they had known him always,

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

and watched a golden sheen highlight the waves in her hair, as a new moon ricochets across a calm sea.

She came to the Coast, heralded as extensively as any girl from a glorified list of the Follies. Yet the half of her charm was never told. Her presence in any room was compelling. She could perceptibly change any corner of a rust-colored world.

Screen and sound tests were made, pronounced exceptional. Then a contract was drawn with special options.

"The find of a lifetime," close friends whispered to Flash. "Why, you'll collect a hot million before you're through managing her."

To such speculation, Flash always replied with a humorous, miserly rubbing of the palms to satisfy them, and wiggled his eyebrows comically. The flippant attitude only concealed a different ambition within, and a deep sun-tan camouflaged what might have otherwise appeared as a flushed countenance. Doubly inspired by the spirit of such compliments, he would retire to his office, where he made his typewriter sing in issuing forth colorful words that might proclaim a new star in the celestial heavens of Hollywood.

"You're *over!*" he often mumbled like a ventriloquist whenever very near to her, regardless of surroundings.

But now and then, after such terse mumblings, he would snap his fingers as if sealing his conviction. Then feeling strangely uncertain, he would relax with a smile and shake his head, as if blocking out some gauzy vision which he could not fathom.

At last the first story was okayed, the scenario perfected, the cast assembled, and the starting date announced.

G O R G E O U S

The first day's work reeled along smoothly, and the large stage was filled with low, complimentary murmurs, always echoing the single word *gorgeous*.

"Didn't I tell you?" Flash mumbled again and again to his *confreres*. "All that girl needs is training, and I intend to see that she gets it."

For hours, he tiptoed his way in and out among myriad spotlights, infinitely more interested in the many photographic angles than the director was. At length, to still his happy nervousness, he retired behind a pile of scenery in a dark corner to watch undisturbed, compelled by her china-blue eyes.

Suddenly, against the walls of the huge stage rang a terrifying scream which glued everyone like puppets to the floor. The criss-cross focus of a sunlight arc had ignited her delicate chiffon dress, and Gorgeous ran the length of the stage enveloped in flames.

Shouts for her to stop running and to roll on the floor were unheeded. Hysterically, she darted in and out of shell scenery, the speed of her action only fanning the flames like a bellows.

First to reach her, Flash hugged the slender form like a father, trying to subdue the fire with his own body. But it was too late. The delicate fabric about her lungs and throat had flared up with lapping fangs of death. Suffocated, her body went limp in her protector's arms. When the rest of the smoldering lace was extinguished, it was evident that life had gone out of her.

A terrible silence ensued which gripped the heart like a vise. Hours passed, during which few words were spoken. Every-



G O R G E O U S

one walked out in the air, crossing and recrossing each other's path about the lot, with no destination.

Flash was not seen again after the funeral.

Some two years later, a former pal evidenced a letter from him, bearing the postmark of Bombay. The brief missive explained that he enjoyed the life of a nomad; that he liked working on the boats out of China; that the South Seas were as wonderfully picturesque in one way as the coasts of India were in another; that Alexandria had been an inspiring city to him, and that the Mediterranean was a gorgeous blue, the hue of human eyes.



It Stinks

"It stinks!"

"It does not stink! I guess I know when a thing stinks!"

A motion-picture scenario conference was in session.

Horatio Van Elf was responsible for the first outburst. Of course, if any of the Van Elfs had heard it, they certainly would have been horrified at such ribaldry. His Bostonian mother would have been shocked, had she heard the expression at any time since his birth, at which moment, she had given him the noble name of Horatio. But as he was now in his forty-fourth year, wizened and sarcastic, it was a long stretch back to the moment of his christening. Nor had his mother ever dreamed that Horatio would serve as gag man in the scenario department of a motion-picture studio.

Seven members sat about a long conference table. Five of them were watching Horatio and Edgar glare at each other, eagerly hoping that the outburst would develop into a long argu-



I T S T I N K S

ment which might ease the mental effort from the toil of story writing.

“What a crabby killjoy you are, Horatio.” Edgar spat at the cuspidor disgustedly. “Always puncturing anybody’s idea-bubble, with that lousy pet line of yours, before it gets the slightest chance for life. Order!” he yelled.

Edgar Savage was the scenario chief and could yell back at anyone. Plus his position, he was proud of several brain children in the form of what he called original stories, which were declared boxoffice successes.

“Furthermore,” Edgar continued with some dignity, “that pet line used to be funny when you first pulled it. Now it’s shop-worn. Get somethin’ new.” After snapping his black eyes around the table, he concluded commandingly: “Now let’s have quiet an’ get going. Am I right, boys?”

“Right as hell, Edgar!” Ham Edwards exclaimed through uneven gold. “Somebody’s goin’ tuh give Horatio a permanent wave sometime for that crack of his.”

Ham Edwards was a short, squint-eyed, canny individual who always wore a tattered straw hat when in conference—for luck, he declared. But in reality it afforded him an opportunity to lean back in his comfortable chair with the luck hat over his eyes, and while assuming the attitude of thinking, to snatch a nap of forty winks many times during the long afternoons. He was second in command; was also a successful writer, even if his stuff was drivel. The name Ham had stayed with him since his acting days, when he had been much younger and less rotund.

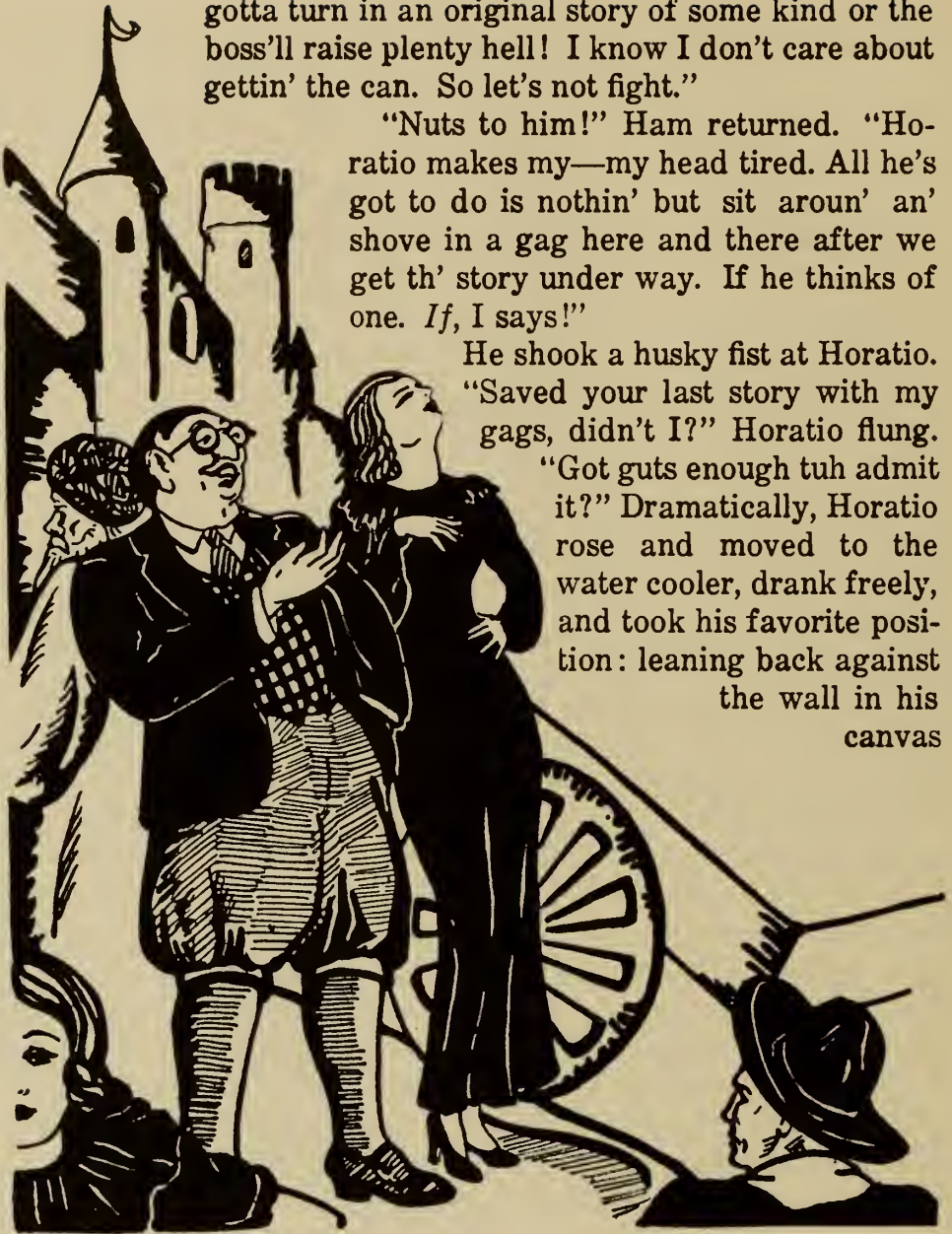
“Now listen, an’ get it, Horatio!” Jay chimed in, a thin, red-haired man of forty-two—a lesser light, fearful of his job. “We

gotta turn in an original story of some kind or the boss'll raise plenty hell! I know I don't care about gettin' the can. So let's not fight."

"Nuts to him!" Ham returned. "Horatio makes my—my head tired. All he's got to do is nothin' but sit aroun' an' shove in a gag here and there after we get th' story under way. If he thinks of one. *If*, I says!"

He shook a husky fist at Horatio. "Saved your last story with my gags, didn't I?" Horatio flung.

"Got guts enough tuh admit it?" Dramatically, Horatio rose and moved to the water cooler, drank freely, and took his favorite position: leaning back against the wall in his canvas



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chair, with one foot dangling against the water-cooler drain bucket.

"Now all of you pipe down!" Edgar demanded. "Whatcha think this is, a arena? We just gotta turn in a Special, the boss wants to call it. We'll be lucky if we get even a lousy idea before night, the way you're actin'. Furthermore, the boss'll break up this staff, surer 'n hell he will, if we don't have somethin' to offer. Most any minute he'll be askin' for an outline. Now everybody get quiet while I think!"

Horatio just had to say: "What with?"

Edgar's eyes snapped fire. His hand drummed an exasperating tattoo on the table.

"No more cracks, Horatio, or so help me, I'll go stool pigeon an' inform the boss." Thinking better of his remark on *exposé*, Edgar temporized, "About your sneakin' out on us whenever that blonde stenographer passes our door to go nose powderin'. Now quiet! Everybody think!"

Violent silence ensued.

The long conference table bore the weight of human hulks. Some leaned forward on it; some placed their feet upon it; many elbows rested upon it, supporting tired chins in welcome palms. The silence grew thick, oppressive, like the moment before a table begins to move at a midnight seance.

A waiting public would have stood in awe, had they seen such thoughtful postures ready to create their entertainment at such mental cost. Tightly pressed lips. Palms cupped in foreheads. Postures in caricature, postures in the throes of concentration, postures, noble in the rough, that would outthink Rodin's famous masterpiece. God's man was penetrating the occult.

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Those who had to wrinkle to think, wrinkled—everyone wrinkled. The silence was broken only by Horatio's foot tapping hopeful moments away against the water-cooler bucket.

Like a restless schoolboy's, Ham's eyes roamed up the facing of the door, around the moulding of the ceiling. For a moment he was watching a fly at the window pane. Then his gaze focused upon the cool green lawn outside, between stages one and two. Midway on the picture lot a couple commanded his attention.

"Lookit, fellas!" he exclaimed and grinned. "Lookit the boss strollin' with that new fem star of his."

Quite as if a recess bell had sounded, thinking was abandoned. The conference broke up at the table and convened at the window.

"Where?" Edgar demanded eagerly. "Gimme a look!"

"The other way, you mug!" Ham informed proudly. "Between the stages, cuttin' across the lawn to the sidewalk."

Contemptuously Horatio sneered: "Lookit th' screwy boss! Why, Mr. Schmaltzing!" he kidded. "How could yuh be so chipper?"

"Now where do you suppose the boss has been with that dame?" Jay chimed in, shading his eyes with a wide palm. "Musta been showin' 'er the lot. They just came from the laboratory. Lookit the goof swell up. You'd think he was the papa already. Wonder if he's showed 'er how nice and cool it is in the projectin' room?"

Just to have something to say, Edgar rebuked his insinuations.

"Right!" Ham agreed. "How can you talk about our boss

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in that manner?" Hoping to prolong the window conference in relief from the story conference, he thrust: "Why, you guys are crazy! She's a nice girl, swell looker, with a foreign aspect."

"So that's what they call it?" Edgar refocused his eyes to ascertain his true convictions. "So she's an importation, eh? From where?"

"Nuts!" Horatio laughed. "Brooklyn's still got things we ain't seen yet!" Much pleased with his statement, he stuck his tongue a half-inch out of his mouth and blew.

The unpopular noise disturbed the others because they had not thought of doing it. Ostracizing Horatio with harsh mock glances, they shifted positions like a football squad, affecting moral attitudes.

"What d' think," Jay coughed to sink his sarcasm, "do they really call that femininity? It's ba-lon-ee to me! Wonder what the publicity department will write in alibi?"

"Feminine my—my eye!" Ham cried, trying to top Jay. "There's a masculine streak in that dame or I'm a pansy."

"Pipe down. Everybody knows you're a pansy," Horatio gulped happily.

"You'll have to prove them words, mah partnah!" Ham announced, and dramatically left the window to strut his false anger. When his attempted comedy got no response, he elbowed his way back to his position at the window, concluding: "No foolin', fellas, that dame's got it, and it ain't it I mean when I say it. Our girls had better watch out. I won't be responsible," he insinuated for fun.

He got a small supper-show laugh.

Waxing moral for effect, Jay spouted: "Oh, for cryin' out

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an' scarin' yuh! You guys would ruin any reputation that stepped onto this lot, even before a columnist could get a break. You keyhole everyone before they get a room. I say it's wrong, boys. Let the girl alone! She too may have had a mother."

"Just give 'er time, just give 'er time," Ham advised humorously.

"What do you mean by that?" one of the silent members made the mistake of asking.

"Oh, you!" Ham replied, rolling his eyes pansy-like. "Go read your Freud! Learn about women from 'im."

"Hey! Have a heart!" Edgar advised seriously, pushing everyone away from the window. "Before you know it, you'll start somethin'. Lots of busted reputations have started that way. Besides, the boss'll look up here any minute and think that we're laughin' at him, which we are. But we oughta have sense enough not to look down the barrel of a cannon."

Reluctantly the staff moved toward the conference table, all but Horatio, who lingered, peeping around the edge of the window, much to Edgar's disgust.

"All right, Horatio," Edgar added sarcastically, "you got a bigger eyeful than we did. Tell us what you think of the gal."

Horatio exploded a bomb shell. "I think she stinks!"

Edgar took the initiative. "We're bad enough with our insinuations, Horatio, without you tryin' to top us with that damned crack of yours. Boy, what a lousy expression! An' I'll tell you what." His eyes snapped fire. "I'm goin' to break you of it, or—"

"Or what?" Horatio growled.

"Or—else!"

Edgar's face went instantly red.

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"Oh, yeah?" Horatio parried.

"Oh, yeah, right back at you!"

"Says you!"

"Says me! And here's my money to back it up."

Edgar threw a wallet on the polished surface of the table; then he started spreading ten-dollar bills out in fan-shaped elegance. When the ten-dollar compartment was emptied, he continued with the lesser denominations, demanding:

"Just tell me when to stop! I'm bettin' that I cure you of sayin' 'It stinks!' "

Contemptuously Horatio aimed a bushy eyebrow at him and snorted: "Stop when your damned wallet's empty!" Then he bellowed: "Then I'll match it, and—"

"And what? I got some very nice blank checks handy, and I'll bet your hand shakes when you start writin'."

Dramatic and impressive, the wager was another help in postponing the story conference. All eyes transferred quickly from one contestant to the other.

"Put up or clamp down!"

Much pleased with himself, Edgar was acting the gambler role he had once written for Tom Mix, playing it all over again with more fervor and satisfaction.

Unable to think of a snappy retort, Horatio glared his contempt and laughed raucously.

"Hey! Pipe down, fellas," Ham whispered nervously. "If the boss should be passin' by, he'd bound in on us and fire everybody. I'll just flip the latch on th' door till you get that money put away."

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"Ham's right!" Jay agreed thoughtfully. "Too near Christmas tuh lose a job."

"Okay," Edgar sanctioned cunningly. "An' speakin' of the boss, I've got to see 'im before he scrams from the lot. There's the bet!" he said with what he thought to be a true gambler's gesture. "Count it while I'm gone. Be back in less than ten minutes."

Elatedly he moved toward the door.

"Count it for 'im, Ham," he sneered. "Maybe Horatio's too nervous to count that much money."

Very conscious that it was a good dramatic exit, Edgar slammed the door.

Horatio glared his contempt; then extended it once around the table. As neatly as any sheriff had ever pulled a gun, he extracted a check book from his pocket. A similar gesture produced a fountain pen. Then he sat like a poser viewing ticker tape in a broker's office, while he studied his check stubs.

The atmosphere was stimulating. The whole staff felt it. It was much better than scenario writing. Respectful attitudes sustained the suspense. To goad Horatio on toward bigger and broader betting, Ham exclaimed:

"Lord, you've doubled his bet," and slapped him on the shoulder.

Grinning his sarcastic best, Jay barbed: "How 'bout a little side bet, Horatio, that this check of yours is bouncy?"

Horatio lifted a bushy eyebrow, said, "Nuts!" and spat at the cuspidor.

Ham scratched the few hairs he had in his head, wondering how he could possibly prolong the argument. A little coaxing, he

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reasoned, might make it all end happily in a trip to Tony's Bar.

The three silent members of the staff edged in. They were livening up. It was the first good fun they had experienced in some time. They had been permitted to talk concerning the bet, which they did frantically until the hall door opened uncannily, as in a mystery play, commanding the attention of every eye.

In a moment, Edgar revealed himself. Standing upon the threshold, he squinted accusingly at his staff, assuming the very dramatic attitude the Indian chief had used in his recent story—the scene where he stood with his arms folded, demanding white squaw.

The staff gave Edgar his dramatic moment, which they knew he desired, all but Horatio, who impudently lit a cigarette and blew the match out with the smoke.

When the pose and the silence had absorbed its theatrical value, Edgar slammed the door and strutted to the table, advising:

"Well, the boss is wild. Of course, he asked how the story was roundin' out, and naturally I had to lie like hell and say: 'Just fine, Governor.' I had to tell 'im that we could outline it 'most any time now. He's crazy to hear it. So let's get goin' an' save our necks. Hot-foot it and get somethin' started, finished if possible. One thing's sure: we gotta make a showin', I'm tellin' yuh!"

"Hey! Finish this first, Big Boy!"

Vehemently Horatio flung his check across the table, which slid, careened, and fell to the floor.

"Bet it's a bad check," Jay moaned. "It damned near made the cuspidor in one. Whata golfer! Whata golfer."

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Everyone laughed but Horatio, who snorted: "Read it and weep!"

Edgar wrote a check to meet the additional amount and indicated that Jay should hold the stakes. Eagerly he did so, mentally recalling his last trip to Tia Juana at a crap game.

"Now we work!" Edgar bellowed. "An' no foolin'! Get story-minded quick! Somethin's gotta happen!"

Assuming thoughtful attitudes, as fast as firemen respond to the first vibrations of the bell, the seven members convened quietly. The three silent members copied Edgar's thoughtful posture. They frowned properly, imitating his lip movement.

Presently, with eyes closed, Edgar began speaking a word or two at a time through tight, distorted lips.

"Now—I was thinkin'," he mumbled on, "of a swell idea—that is—well—take th' same theme that they used in All Quiet on the Western Front, f'r instance—exceptin' instead of havin' the story about war, it—"

"It stinks!"

Edgar glared across at Horatio. His eyes snapped, but he controlled his temper cunningly, as if he had some better retort for Horatio at a later moment.

"All right," he said simply. "You tell one, Horatio, an' we'll listen. That's more than you ever do for us."

Knowing that it would be quite some time now before he would be able to glimpse Tony's Bar, Jay sidled over to the water cooler. On resuming his table position, he closed his eyes and worked his mouth peculiarly, as Edgar always did.

Suddenly Edgar coughed, which meant that he was actually thinking. Everyone informed the boss that he too was thinking,

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by clearing his throat and coughing. Then everyone coughed. The coughing got to be rhythmical, syncopating and then synchronizing like a locomotive barely able to make a steep grade.

After a brief silence, Ham happened to grunt.

Expectantly everyone opened his eyes, waiting. A grunt always meant at least the starting of an idea. When Ham saw the gaze of the entire staff riveted upon him, he felt compelled to utter something in revelation.

"Ah," he began with no heart in it, then added quickly: "Naw, that wouldn't do! Sorry."

Relieved, he closed his eyes again, making a mental note never to grunt again in a story conference.

Five members of the staff evidenced great disgust for the interruption by changing positions and closing their eyes. The three silent members closed their eyes without changing positions.

The wall clock ticked on, the only harmonious mechanism in the room. To Horatio it was dissonant, always seeming to say "plot-plot, plot-plot," annoyingly. He cast a bushy eyebrow up at it.

Ham lit a cigarette, burned his fingers, and snapped them.

The snapping of fingers meant a plot for anybody's money. The whole staff sat up, alert, stimulated, expectant. Sensing himself on the spot, Ham began mumbling.

"Here's a plot that's—f-f-f-fair," he stuttered. "That hasn't been used. I mean, in quite some time. Of course, it's not new."

"Bet it's th' one about th' lost little girl with th' locket around her neck," Horatio snickered. "An' her poor father hasn't seen 'er fer twelve years, 'cause of th' Indian raid on the fort."

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"Nuts to you, Horatio!" Edgar snapped. "I'm runnin' this conference, if you don't mind." Cooling his temper quickly, he spoke professionally: "Now, here's an idea. I was thinkin' that—take the wrestler idea. You know, the wrestler and his cute little son. Now, he drinks. The wrestler drinks, an' he—"

"Wouldn't steal a plot, would yuh, pal?"

Ignoring Horatio's thrust, Edgar narrowed his eyes to the appearance of almonds.

"To continue the wrestler idea," he reprimanded forcefully.

"To interrupt—an' beggin' your pardon," Ham broke in, with an eye for business, "can I ask now if everybody's got their tickets for the wrestlin' match at the Hollywood Stadium for Thursday night? I got a few left which I get a commission on. What say? Gimme a break?"

Hoping he could work up an argument which might last until quitting time, Jay sneered: "Aw, yuh mean that lousy match. That goof Swede who's neckin' it with the Grand Herstock? He's weak as Horatio's gags. The match'll be a complete wash-out. The Swede smells! He's a cluck without a quack."

"Guess I ain't so dumb," Ham began eulogizing. "I got a straight tip on 'im. Got thirty bucks placed, an' don't laugh. I wouldn'ta brought up the subject if it hadn't been for Edgar mentionin' the wrestler plot," he alibied.

An argument got quickly under way, pleasing the three silent members and annoying Edgar exceptionally.

"Aw, it'll be a screwy match!" Horatio contended. "This guy Herstock's a foreigner who's tryin' tuh muscle in on th' Hollywood fans with a lotta hooley publicity. I calls 'im yellow, an' when I calls 'em, they stay called," he finished with a wry

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smile toward Edgar. Edgar's silence gave him courage and he ventured: "Now, what yuh think of that fer a mouthful?"

"I think we ought to work," Edgar returned calmly.

Regardless of admonitions from the chief, the argument waxed hot, loud, and boisterous. Much incensed, Horatio commanded the situation by pacing the floor like a panther, firing his views in verbal salvos, wielding windmill gestures.

Suddenly the hall door opened.

Mr. Emanuel E. Schmaltzing, president and general manager of the studio, stood like a little Napoleon in the frame of the door. He seemed to be happy, appreciating activity in the room. He rubbed his hands parsimoniously, adjusted his bifocal glasses, looked left and right in anticipation, and asked with a threat in his tone:

"Vel, boys, how's de story coming?"

The staff gulped like students surprised by a professor. No one seemed capable of answering Mr. Schmaltzing's inquiry. His bifocal glasses rendered them speechless.

Horatio had been gesticulating so terrifically concerning the wrestler that he stood poised like a ball player who has just struck a foul. Ham rattled the pages of an old manuscript on the table, as if its contents had a bearing on the present plot. Jay drew his handkerchief ostentatiously, as if to stifle a probable sneeze. The three silent members of the staff knew enough to turn toward Edgar, but were astonished to see him calmly and meticulously picking diminutive bits of lint from his coat sleeve.

"Why," Ham heard himself say and was immediately sorry, for all eyes turned questioningly upon him.

At that moment a miracle saved him. Jay coughed, drawing

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the fire of their gaze. After moistening his dry lips he started mumbling incoherently.

"Gee, it's goin' to be a great story!" he managed, and forced a sickly smile. Additional courage caused him to add: "You'll love it."

With a prop smile, Mr. Schmaltzing looked from one member to the other, finally resting his bifocals upon Horatio. Using more force in his tone than Jay had been able to evidence, Horatio assured:

"It's a pip, Governor. Sure is okay!"

This was Edgar's moment. With a calm voice which surprised his staff, he announced:

"Yes, Governor, as Horatio says: 'It sure is okay!' Swell, in fact. But it would be unfair for me to relate it, unfair to Horatio. After all, he was the originator. Fact is, he worked harder, generally speakin', than any of us. Got us all upset at times with the weight of his remarks. We all tried hard enough, but it was Horatio who rounded it all out after we got stuck. You know, that does happen now and then in the best of families."

With the pride of a teacher, he fixed his attention on Horatio, causing Mr. Schmaltzing to take a seat at the table and do likewise.

"Don't be sensitive, Horatio," Edgar said ambiguously. "The boys won't be jealous if you tell the story, will you, boys? No, of course not," he added quickly to relieve their worried minds. "Go on, tell the Governor, Horatio. I was going to say: tell him the climax, but that's no good. Why not begin right where I wanted you to earlier in the afternoon, right at the beginning, eh, Governor?"

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While Mr. Schmaltzing smiled his answer, the rest of the staff received assuring glances from Edgar and turned poker faces upon Horatio.

On the spot and knowing it, Horatio moved toward the water cooler, as if making preparations for what promised to be a long recital. He drank copiously, stalling, trying to remember the opening of any story. But his mind wouldn't function. Beads of perspiration sprang out on his brow, and he took his chair appearing every inch a dunce without the cap. He squirmed and twisted, slid about and wiggled, coughed and cleared his throat many times. Then like one saying goodbye to hope, he began mumbling in a contrite tone which was an SOS for Edgar's ears.

"You see, Governor, it's a story," he stammered. "You see—well, it ain't no ordinary story. It's hard to begin."

"Yes?" Mr. Schmaltzing inflected with a hiss.

"Yes," Horatio repeated. "This story ain't no common one." He moistened his lips and smacked them emphatically. "And, boy, has it an opening!" With something resembling lost hope, he turned toward Edgar. "Grand opening, eh?"

Watching the sickly smile about his gills, Edgar replied: "You know what I think, Horatio, but I don't want to say a thing until the Governor gives his reactions. So outline it carefully. Just *make* us listen, like you did all afternoon. Be patient, Governor. In a few moments he'll make you stand up and shout."

Horatio groaned inwardly.

After catching each other's expressions, Ham and Jay closed their eyes, posing as if listening to sweet organ music.

"Vel, let's get goin'," Mr. Schmaltzing urged. "Time is money!" he concluded in the tones of a judge.

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"Okay, Governor." Horatio gulped. "Well, th' Alps is our locale. Swell openin', eh? Yes, sir, swell! An' the girl—she's wonderful. You know, wistful. We get away from the commonplace, see? No chance fer censorship. She's an orphan. See how smooth we open?" His predicament stimulated emotion. Forcefully, he added: "Yes, an orphan an', boy, is she lonely!"

Heat waves made his brain weary. Vaguely he saw the fawning faces of the staff enjoying his last round-up.

"Yes, yes," he stuttered on, "she's an orphan. You know, Governor—no mother, no father!"

Mr. Schmaltzing frowned. His lip curled a little.

"Now this guy that's after th' girl is a heavy, see? Well, he ain't exactly a heavy at first. A complex character, that's what he is." His bony finger emphasized the statement like a metronome. "Yes," he whispered in reverence, "neither good nor bad. I mean, he ain't no goody-goody. The lousy side predominates."

With a weakness pervading him, Horatio slowed down. The immovable executive sat like the Sphinx. To Horatio, his fox eyes looked bigger than those which had frightened Little Red Riding Hood. Horatio, his brain seeming a vacuum, squirmed on his chair like a little boy whose hand the teacher failed to see. And like the little boy, he wanted to shout, "May I be excused?" but when his mouth opened, it said:

"So far, Governor, whatcha think?"

Rising to his full height, the dignified Mr. Schmaltzing answered as Edgar had secretly rehearsed him.

"I think it stinks!" he shouted, slamming out of the room like a maniac, leaving Horatio with bank-account vibrations in his knees.

Glamor Afar

From the bench, a dignified judge scanned the faces of the witnesses in an interesting case. At times, he expelled a sigh, as if human relations were still an astonishing problem to him.

Two girls sat side by side, exchanging innocent glances in regard to the testimony. When testifying, neither told the whole truth, nor revealed all the information about the case. The judge seemed prejudiced, and the girls apparently knew it.

A short two years before, the two girls had emerged from a motion-picture theater in Hoboken, New Jersey, very much inspired by the performance of a star. This evidence was never introduced in court—a secret known only by them and a house-keeper.

“I’m going to marry that actor,” the ambitious one had said to her companion on the way home.

“What makes you talk that way, Belle? You’re crazy! Like as not he wouldn’t give you a second look if you were in Hollywood. And if he did, it might be one of those things that turn out to be a terrible mistake.”

“Just the same, I’m going to marry him if it’s the last thing I do in my life.”

“Gee, Belle! You oughtn’t say that. It might come true. What if it shouldn’t be like you imagined it would? You can’t never tell what a man is like at a distance, and Mom says you can’t be sure anyway.”

“I’m sure!”

Her sound conviction caused silence. The two strolled on home meditatively.

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That night, the apprehensive one informed the housekeeper of the strange desire of her companion; and that lady, as diplomacy dictated, came forth with some good sound advice about men. First she quoted, "All is not gold that glitters," said, "Be careful, my dear," and continued voicing many well-learned bits of philosophy regarding human relations, but none of her advice did any good.

Belle saved her money carefully. When she had accumulated the railway fare to the Coast, and a reasonable surplus as a vacation fund, she started west for Hollywood, glamor, and marriage.

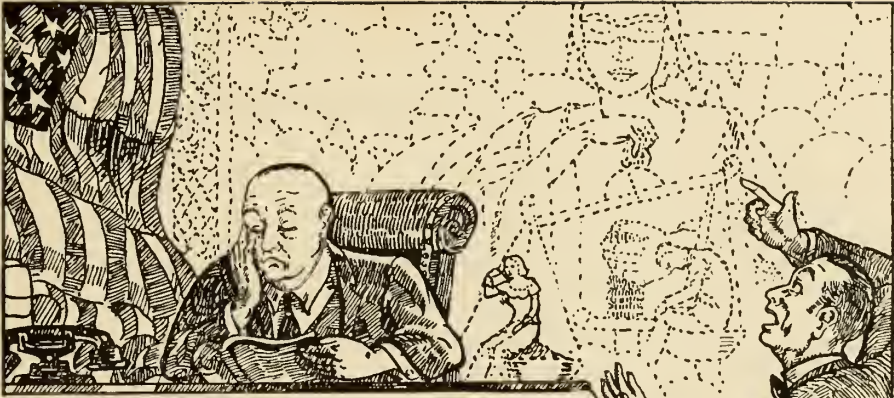
The concentration upon her desire was so powerful that, Cinderella-like, ways and means fell into line as easily as magic words produce the unattainable in fairy tales.

Two invitations to Mayfair presented a problem. Which was the most advantageous? Which might place her in the continual line of vision of the star she intended hitching her wagon to?

Fate decreed, or was she riding the waves in the wake of her own billowy thinking?

Amid a brilliant gathering, two large parties were seated at adjacent tables, easily boasting of celebrities which most of the world had never seen in the flesh.

Through an avenue of bodies, a lovely girl compelled the attention of a handsome star. Momentary glances continued as the evening wore on. Casual turns of the head, by the hero, resolved into a steady gaze through the smoke tendrils from his cigarette. On the dance floor, a haunting face loomed like a dramatic vision at every turn, ever-fading through the mass of

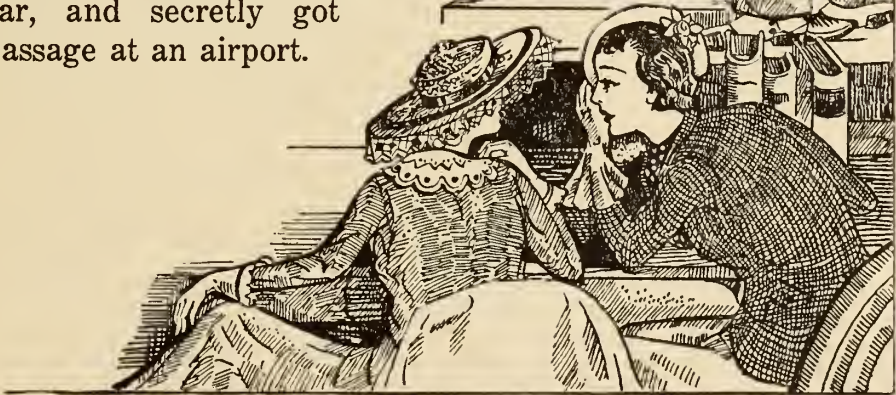


merrymakers. At length, he obtained an invitation and pleaded for the pleasure of a dance.

A fast and furious romance followed.

Parties, dances, gay festivities, motor trips, yachting, and race-track boxes evidenced a happy pair who were continually "in the midst of things." Night-club news columns reported a couple that were "that way" about each other.

One night, at a private carnival, in the "wee sma'" hours, the couple slipped away, entered a powerful motor car, and secretly got passage at an airport.



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A little over an hour later, an Arizona correspondent rushed to a telegraph office with rare news of the elopement and marriage of a famous star to an unknown Miss from Hoboken.

Columnists, all over the country, had their say, speculating, none too subtly, on the successful outcome of such a union.

On hearing the news, Hollywood went agog. The sinuous path of calumny wound its way snake-like to all listeners.

Months passed. The news got about that the actor was tiring of his new wife from Hoboken.

Comfortably established in a "guilted cage," the ambitious little girl bore up as best she could. At breakfast she met a drunken husband, sat across from a sullen countenance at lunch, and encountered silence and mumblings at the evening meal until her hero needed the aid of the butler to be carried to bed. Her friend from Hoboken and the housekeeper came to the Coast for a visit, but they brought no consolation.

"And so this unbearable situation is at an end," her attorney attested with the few meager facts she had told him. "And now she seeks a divorce because she realizes that her marriage has resolved into a mistake."

The kind-faced judge signed a bill for divorcement and gave her custody of the mistake.



An Old Spanish Custom

"Hello. Central Casting?"

"Yes."

"This is Ed Spencer at Beaux Arts Studios."

"Yes, Mr. Spencer."

"Have you any idea where we can get in touch with a character actor named Ramon Fernandez? What agent manages him? He's pure Castilian. We want him to supervise. I understand he has also directed some very good shorts."

"Call you right back, Mr. Spencer."

"Thanks."

The entire staff at the Beaux Arts Studios was very much perturbed over the filming of a Spanish version to a successful motion picture, and there were numerous reasons to warrant their anxiety. The predominant one was to insure pure Spanish speech, the last opus to reach Madrid having been laughed at on account of its diction, phraseology, and style.

In answer to their producer's harsh criticism, the whole staff had "passed the buck," scattering blame ruthlessly. But each had sworn, in his own heart, that if the Chief overlooked the malfeasance, he, as a committee of one, would never allow it to happen again.

"Hello. Central Casting calling Beaux Arts Studios."

"Right."

"We've located your Spanish supervisor."

Mr. Ramon Fernandez was summoned, and after much questioning, was handed a contract which pleased him excep-

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tionally. He was immediately given a beautifully equipped office, made very comfortable, and promptly forgotten.

Weeks passed.

Baffled and afraid of offending, Mr. Fernandez reported punctually at nine in the morning and never thought of leaving before five in the afternoon, during which time he daily tried to gain an audience with some executive.

"In conference," the secretaries invariably informed him but assured him not to worry. "Everything is continually getting postponed here," they consoled with simple understanding.

A little humiliated, Mr. Fernandez did his best to smile, accepted the faineancy, collected his checks regularly, bearing up quite well. The financial reimbursement seemed to quell his pride. Neat figures in his bank book were consoling.

Three days before his contract expired, he decided to demand an audience with someone—anyone. Many long hours he sat on a hard bench, watching three different doors for a possible chance to accost human authority.

The three days were spent in the same posture, on the same hard bench, reading the same magazines, absorbing nothing from their pages, feeling like an office statue.

Accepting his last check from the dumb cashier, he left the lot in wonderment, possessing a stronger belief in Santa Claus and a weaker belief in human nature.

Weeks went by.

Again Mr. Fernandez received a hurry call from the same studio. He was informed that a Spanish version of a motion picture was to be made. The purity of speech must be supervised. Did he speak Spanish?

AN OLD SPANISH CUSTOM

Buckling his astonishment within, Mr. Fernandez said, "I do," as meekly as a groom.

"Ah, then you are our protector," this new executive complimented and drew a contract.

Mr. Fernandez occupied the same beautiful office, came and went as he had formerly done, and collected his checks promptly as before. Three days before the expiration of his contract, he read the same old magazines while waiting in the same position, watching the three important office doors, sitting on the hard bench like a statue.

In a mental fog, he approached the cadaverous cashier, accepted his last check, and sauntered out of the studio gate as wide-eyed as a released prisoner.

Weeks passed.

A hurry call to the Beaux Arts Studios caused Mr. Fernandez to speculate whether or not they were going to ask him to give part of the money back. Bravely he decided to be mute, and if necessary, allow them to sue. But when he heard the reason for the summons, he commenced to doubt his mental equilibrium. A sudden dizziness enveloped him. Was he fainting?

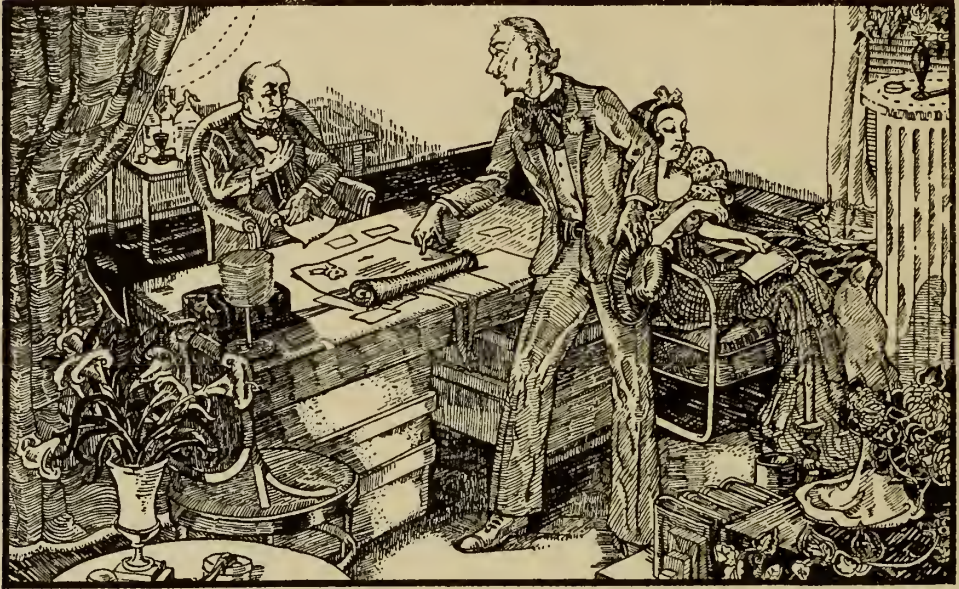
A powerful executive smiled but spoke sincerely, carefully, as if he would impart his secret to no one else.

"We are about to make a Spanish version of a motion picture," he informed confidentially. "Now we are very, very particular in seeking someone who speaks the language purely. Do you—"

"Wait!" the Spaniard interrupted.

Rising to his full height, he moved forward, extracting his credentials. He spread the lesser ones about the edge of the

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desk, and like a map, unfolded his diploma from the University of Barcelona, signed by the king.

As if he could absorb fluently, the producer scrutinized the prized document, then lifted his eyes questioningly.

“All very good,” he said skeptically, “but do you speak Spanish?”



Onward Bound

An hour before dawn the east-bound Limited stopped briefly at Cherokee Junction, left two passengers, then wound on snake-like into the night.

Joseph Dillon guided his emotional wife across a snow-covered platform, mumbling vile oaths of dissatisfaction against the snow, the cold, and everything in general.

"Oh, please don't, Joe!" his wife moaned through chattering teeth. She placed a handkerchief over her mouth and talked through it. "You only make me feel worse when you rant on at every little thing."

"Rant? God, why shouldn't I! What is there left to live for? You tell me. Everything is black. It's the end."

Irritably he swung his wife toward a dismal-looking sign which, with yellow winks, proclaimed sardonically: Quick Lunch.

"Get a load of that greasy beanery!" Joe derided.

Failure in Hollywood was horrible enough, but the loss visited upon him the day before cankered his soul. Now the slip-slide progress across the icy bricks only goaded him on to further blasphemy.

"Joe, were both our trunks put off that baggage car?"

"Say, have you gone nutty? You stood right there with me, watchin'. What in hell are you askin' such a question for?"

"Don't know. Wanted something to say, I guess. Every now and then my thoughts get beyond my control, and I just have to talk."

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

She stood shivering while he held the lunch-room door open against a north wind which challenged all his strength.

The warm air of the small room quickly changed the chemistry of Joe Dillon's body, but not his distorted mind. Banging heavily upon the counter, he threw a hateful flock of words toward the kitchen, demanding service.

"Joe, don't act that way. We've got to go on living just the same. I guess we do," she corrected with mystery in her tone. Then her eyes went instantly moist.

"Aw, nuts!" Joe scoffed, then bellowed, "Coffee!" like a sideshow barker.

"Stop it, Joe! I'm trying to take the blow bravely. He was my baby as well as yours!"

"Sorry I can't take it so well!" Joe barked back, hissing distaste through set molars. "What a God-forsaken world this is! No money to give it a decent burial. How do you suppose I feel, havin' a kid o' mine buried out here in the wilds? And what a life for us to live! Us who should be somethin', bobbin' about the country, playin' dinky vaudeville dates to numbskulls who don't know a swell act when they see one. What a life! God, what a life! What a—"

"Now listen, Joe, I can't stand any temper today! I just can't!"

She relaxed her elbows on the counter and covered her eyes with her hands, while her husband raved on without restraint, ready to hurl a decanter on sight of a truant waiter.

Presently a middle-aged man descended the tiny stairs leading to the mezzanine floor. He mumbled low-toned apologies as he wiped steamy-looking eyes with the corner of his apron.

ONWARD BOUND

Half locking his temper up to please his wife, Joe demanded, "Coffee!" with accusations in his tone.

"Only a minute or two," the waiter returned in a kindly voice. "I'm a little late this morning, but it won't take long now that I've got myself together."

Through tightly drawn slits, Joe watched the waiter's exit and sneered: "Imagine a waiter havin' to get himself together? Numb, that's what that guy is from the ears up, like all the yokels in this part of the country!"

"Be tolerant, Joe. Be grateful that you've got a warm place to wait. The local won't be along for an hour."

"But didn't the mug know a train was due? Shoulda had coffee ready! The railroad company oughta pull his license from him. I'll tell him plenty when he pops his funny head in here again with that prop smile on his dead pan. Bet he's the kind of a waiter who says: 'If you like our service, tell others. If not, tell us.' Aw—"

He curled his lips to make an unpopular sound when his eyes fell upon a collie dog descending the tiny stairs. Like a convert, Joe exclaimed:

"God, what a beautiful collie! Just like the kid's."

Messenger-like, the dog made its way to the customers, placing a damp nose of affection in each of their hands. Then as if asking some question through sad eyes, it raised a gentle paw to Joe's knee.

"Catch that?" Joe said fervently as his mind shot back a year. "Just like the kid's dog used to do. Whaddya s'pose it's tryin' to tell me? Somethin' important, I bet."

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

The waiter swung in from the kitchen with steaming water for the coffee urn.

"My, he's the very image of our collie back home," the wife said, just to make conversation. "We got one for our baby when it was two. That breed of dog just seems to know everything, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does," the owner replied, adjusting the blaze under the urn. "The dog knows that something's the matter. That's why it's so sad. My little boy died last night. He's so still and white on his bed upstairs that the dog don't know what to make of it. We generally have a big romp at this hour, waitin' for the Limited that just dropped you off."

He straightened up from the urn, questioningly.

"Do you know much about collies? Mine won't eat a thing. All it does is go up and down them stairs and whine. I've heard of that story about love birds starvin' themselves if—but I don't think that a collie would. Say, I remember somethin' in the ice box that might tempt him."

Hurrying toward the kitchen, he talked as he went, assuring good coffee in another few minutes.

Silence weighed down heavily.

The dim lights in the room went dimmer through the mist over Joe's eyes. An awful surging emotion in his bosom forced him to slip from the stool at the counter and draw very near to his wife. When he found voice, he implored:

"Anna, I can understand how you have been able to take the blow of our kid's death, but," he cleared the huskiness from his throat, "I can't understand how you've been able to stand for me. Don't answer me now or I can't take it, but from now on I

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want you to know that it's a new page with me. If you think you can forgive the past, why, you'll never have to mention my temper or any of my terrible habits again."

Her hand ran along the counter edge until it touched her husband's, where she left it in the strength of his grasp.

The waiter emerged from the kitchen with a saucer of choice morsels. He was very much surprised when the collie began eating from the hands of the customers, as if it had known them always.

After serving the pair, the owner drew coffee for himself and sat near them, seeming grateful for companionship, though he said little.



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Silently they all communed together while watching the dawn of a new day chase the darkness from the snow-covered junction. When the local clanged in, they exchanged a toneless farewell, profuse with onward-bound gestures of courage.

* * * *

A starved-looking author leaned across a shiny mahogany desk with eyes upon a motion-picture supervisor.

"What do you think of that for a story, Chief?" he asked nervously.

"Naw, no good!" the producer grumbled. "There's no scenario in it for my money. How can you make a picture with material that's so heavy? There's no comedy relief at all. You'll break people's hearts and the boxoffice at the same time with stuff like that."

The author began, "Well—" gulped, and stuttered: "But that's only one of my stories. I've been ill so long that I have written quite a number. Here's one I think you'll like because of its humor. If you have time, I'd like to read part of it. I'll read quickly, then tell you the rest. I call it:

The Love Cure

Bill was fat and congenial, and Mamie was thin and calculating.

"I love you, Mamie," Bill said religiously, each time he left her front steps.

Bill Splivin was a bond salesman. Mamie Conti worked

ONWARD BOUND

extra in motion pictures. Ever since he could remember, Bill had had a yen to marry an actress. Thinking Mamie one had caused him to propose continually.

One night when he was leaving her front porch, Mamie said: "Okay, Bill, but I might as well tell you that I couldn't possibly



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have the slightest interest in marrying a man who had anything to do with liquor.”

While edging down the steps, Bill made a firm decision.

“I’ll quit drinkin’!” he blurted out, surprising her somewhat. “And that’s not all. I’ll change everything you’ve said you don’t like in me. I got a temper that’s vile, and I know it. I’ll change that too. Yep, have a good house-cleanin’. Now, how’s that for a flock of resolutions?”

Flippantly Mamie returned: “You gotta show me!”

“I will! I’ll start from this very night. I won’t see you again until I’m cured of the liquor habit. It takes a week to do it, they tell me.”

With a firm conviction, he skipped lightheartedly to his car.

There was courage in Bill’s soul, tingling from head to foot. His foot happily played a game of tag with the motor accelerator. The car fairly soared down the boulevard. Resolution had infused new life into him.

Yes, he’d go right away, he reasoned, and get booked at that what-you-may-call-it place, where they cure alcohol addicts. Within a week he could return and win Mamie’s respect and hand. Meantime, he’d concentrate a lot on his temper, conquer everything, in fact, and spread that Christian spirit also. Why hadn’t he thought of doing it before?

The car sped faster and faster with each new decision.

The purr of a motorcycle alongside gave him goose pimples. “Pinched!” he grumbled through gritting teeth. It always gave him goose pimples to hear one of those slippery eels of a cop edging alongside, and to see him twist in front with his arrogant wave of authority.

ONWARD BOUND

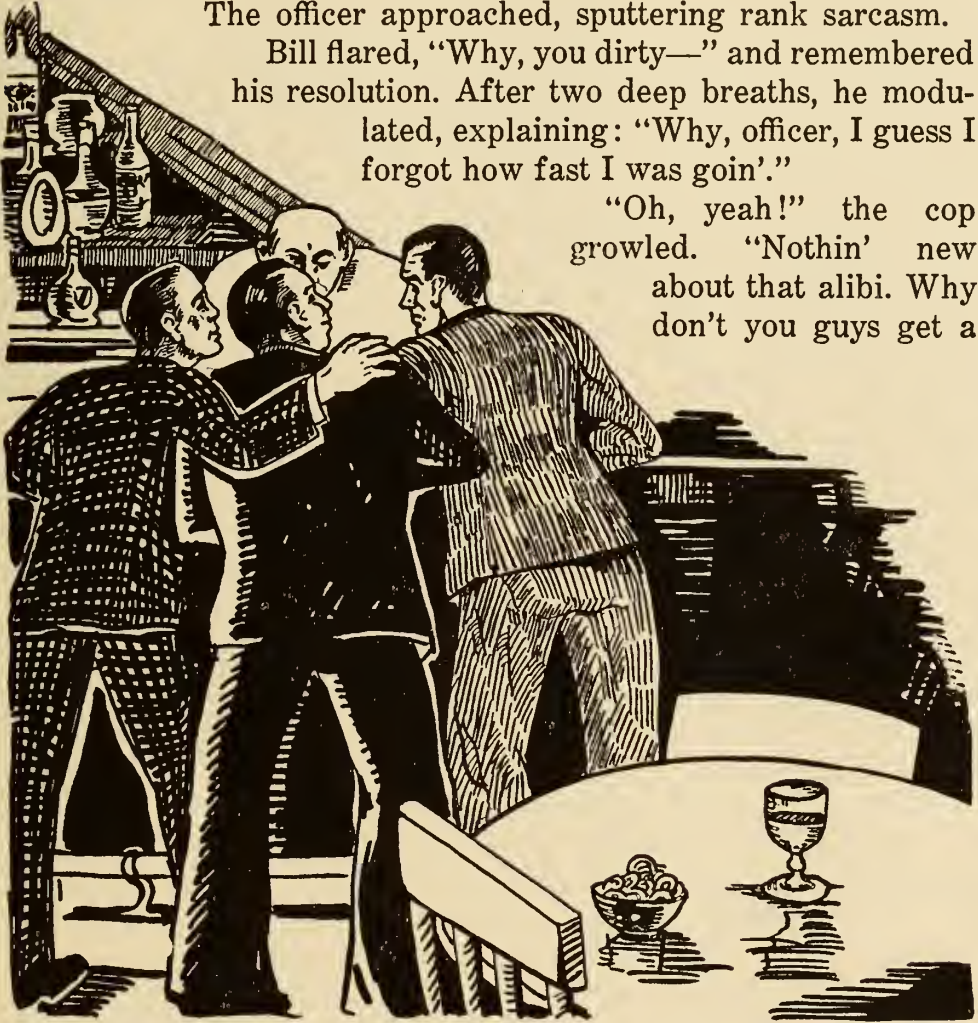
"Over to the curb!" the officer demanded belligerently.

To himself, Bill mumbled: "I'll keep my trap closed if it kills me."

The officer approached, sputtering rank sarcasm.

Bill flared, "Why, you dirty—" and remembered his resolution. After two deep breaths, he modulated, explaining: "Why, officer, I guess I forgot how fast I was goin'."

"Oh, yeah!" the cop growled. "Nothin' new about that alibi. Why don't you guys get a



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new line to spout when you get caught for speedin'? Lemme look at your license card?"

Meeting every rough insinuation with grunts, Bill held his temper and wondered, not a little, why the officer hadn't returned his Christian-like spirit.

After presenting the ticket, the cop bellowed, "Get a new line," mounted his mechanical steed, and whizzed off for the foxy hunt.

Quite suddenly, Bill experienced a new thrill. He had used diplomacy for the first time in his life. He had used grunts instead of curses; had won a battle which he had never thought of fighting before this eventful night. The night took on a radiant hue, and the evening breeze cooled his remaining temper. Exhilarated by the achievement of such self-control, he sped down the boulevard in ecstasy.

Again the purr of a motorcycle alongside gave him goose pimples. His flesh quivered, and his stomach heaved at the thought of being presented with another speed ticket from the same officer in less than five minutes.

"Over to the curb!" came a caustic command.

Desire to curse the ambusher was squelched by thoughts of Mamie. Through chattering teeth, he forced a pleasant-sounding answer, full of lawful respect.

"I'm sorry, officer," he finished meekly.

"Sorry!" the cop thundered. "Why, the judge'll crucify yuh when he finds yuh with two tickets. Yuh don't seem to learn, do yuh? Didja ever go to school? Better try a drivin' school!"

"And you can't overlook it just this once, officer?"

"Naw! I hope the judge says: 'Jail!' You deserve it!"

ONWARD BOUND

"Why, you son—why, you sum up things awful funny."

With fists opening and closing in deep desire, Bill regretfully thought that trying to be a Christian was too much. His eyes closed; he counted up to ten several times. When he opened his eyes again, an inscribed ticket was waiting under his nose.

His attitude and silence were misunderstood.

"What's the matter this time?" the cop growled. "You're not entertainin' me with any bedtime stories. What's the big excuse you've thought of? Let's have it. I need a laugh!"

"Love," Bill answered like a convert, shocking him. "Love made me speed tonight, because I was so happy. Love kept me silent when I wanted to curse you, call you dirty names, and beat you up. Love did all that," he concluded forcefully. "And now you can go to hell!"

"Boy, that's a new one I ain't never heard yet!" While testing his motor, the officer shook with laughter. On moving into traffic, he yelled back: "Sorry I can't tear up that ticket. You deserve to have it killed!"

Many red stop-signals grinned at Bill along the boulevard, but he was as alert to them as he was to his motor speed. He moved along like a snail and finally drew up in front of a building declaring its cure for alcoholism. Its dark doorway, however, informed him that a new day would have to dawn before he could enroll.

"God—I mean, gee," Bill corrected quickly. "I wanted to sign up tonight for the whole works, tuh keep outa temptation's way. Now ain't that hell—I mean, awful. There ain't nothin' to do, or no place to go."

Then the devil took possession of Bill Splivin.

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Lightning-like, he thought: I'll go over to Harry's Bar, but his resolution screamed "No!" right back at him.

"H-m," Bill mumbled, and thought: This resolution stuff is too much for me. I bet I don't make it! Goin' saint certainly plays hell with a guy!

He drove slowly down the street, very slowly, and turned at a certain corner, hardly conscious of the direction.

"I'll just go over to Harry's Bar for a minute or two," the devil argued for Bill. "Have a coupla drinks, and—"

"No!" a saint in the form of Mamie condemned.

"Well, then, I'll just go over an' not have anything to drink," Bill argued on his own. "No harm in jus' goin' over. See the bunch, whoever's there. No harm in jus' goin' over. The gang'll be glad to know about this decision on reform."

"Sure, they're all nice, sympathetic boys. Now there's a firm decision," the devil made him reason.

His foot on the gas responded to the diabolical urge.

At nine o'clock the next morning, Bill Splivin was hanging on to Harry's Bar with a weak hand. Two pals had sympathetically helped him celebrate "going on the wagon." They were loyal boys; had kept vigil all night, just to be sure that Bill got to the what-you-may-call-it cure place on time.

Ed Harris, now sagging a little at the hips, announced: "S-nine klock, Bill. S-time tuh book yuh at th' call-it place."

Ned Bates wasn't quite so cockeyed. He could talk straight, stand straight, and almost see straight.

"Yep," he urged, "we gotta give you up, Bill, though we hate it, for seven whole days, while they make you sick of liquor, vomit, and get cured. Let's get goin'."

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“But we’re seein’ yuh through!” Ed declaimed.

“Right!” Ned exclaimed, patting Bill’s shoulder. “An’ you’ll ’member us, will yuh, when you’re cured? Now we’re goin’. Yep, goin’ tuh land you in state. We won’t even let yuh drive your own car. Any orders, pal?”

Bill lifted a shaking hand with a glass in it.

“M-mm las’ drink uf anythin’ bud wadder,” he mumbled slowly.

It was interpreted correctly by Nick. Ed wasn’t sure of anything until he saw Nick leading Bill toward the street door. Then thought filtered through his numb skull, and he brought up the rear in a wide, uncertain circle.

The cool morning air had a refreshing effect on Nick. He leaned Bill against the brick wall, advised deep breathing, and demonstrated with miniature calisthenics.

Two school girls passed quickly, giving a wide berth, implying that they knew the difference between a man and the leaning Tower of Pisa.

“So what!” Nick sputtered toward the giggling girls, and led Bill to his car, pouring him into the tonneau.

Ed wasn’t much help. He waited on the curb until the car seemed to come around again; then he got in carefully.

“I’ll drive,” Nick advised thickly. “Hey, Ed! Hold Bill’s head. Don’t let it jerk off!”

While testing the motor violently, Nick thought of a possibility of having his own head held, probably by a trained nurse, if the kaleidoscopic effect before his eyes did not cease.

Back in the tonneau, Ed was patting Bill’s shoulder tenderly,

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cheerfully repeating, "Ol' boy, ol' boy, ol' boy," which, relative to nothing, even Einstein could not interpret.

The car started with a jerk. Cries from Bill caused Nick to kill the motor.

"Ed, what's Bill yellin' about back there? What's he sayin'? Maybe it's important."

"He says you drr-ive."

"Sure I'll drive. Fast too, Bill. I'll step on it an' get you there in nothin' at all."

The thought of another ticket brought forth wild grunts from Bill, who could vision nothing but a judge and an electric chair.

"Oh, drive slow. I sure will, Bill. It's your party. Anythin' yuh want. I'll put 'er in low gear an' keep it there all the way if it hurts your head to go fast."

Gears ground, the car started easily. The extremely slow speed impressed the traffic officer at the corner. Ed's position, hugging Bill, and the cockeyed look in Nick's face caused him to assume that it was a pacing-car for an oncoming funeral. He whistled, stopping the traffic each way.

The car passed the intersection in that honorable respect extended to mourners.

Seven days later, Bill Splivin emerged from the cure, a new man in body and soul. He had fought a hard fight and had won. He would never touch liquor again. Now he could rush to Mamie, tell her how right she was, and claim her as his reward.

Jumping into his car like a juvenile, he sped down the boulevard toward the house of his desire.

With a firm hand, he stopped the car in front of Mamie's

ONWARD BOUND

house, which had so often wobbled its way about, took the steps two at once, and rang the bell vigorously while he whistled a few bars of *The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise*.

"Is it really you, Mr. Splivin!" the landlady gushed. "Have you been to Palm Beach or something? You look wonderful!"

Modestly accepting her compliments, Bill asked for his sweetheart.

"Oh, Mr. Splivin, ain't you heard? Mamie's married! Yes, she is! Eloped with that Mr. Wainto—whatever his name was. You know, the man who used to sell us the gin."

Quite confused, Bill descended the steps. He sat meditatively in his car for a few moments, trying to grasp the situation. He wasn't really crazy about Mamie, he analyzed; then mumbled:

"What a dirty trick to play on a guy. I've lost my taste for liquor."

* * * *

Looking hopefully up from his manuscript, the author eyed the producer.

"Can you use a story like that, Chief?" he ventured with salesmanship in his tones.

"I have a vision!" The producer smacked his lips. "We'll blend the two stories into one. Tie up an interest between this fella in your story entitled, *The Cure*, with the woman in your story entitled, *Onward Bound*. Don't make him a bond salesman. He's a vaudeville agent, see? The two guys that get drunk with him all night are comics, get it? Now this girl Mamie is jealous of the woman in the first story. We'll mix a little kidnaping up into it, but not on the level, see? Mamie gets the kid

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away from the mother and hides it, to teach the ol' man a good lesson. Then we don't have the heavy story stickin' out like a



ONWARD BOUND

sore thumb. And we'll call the new draft, Love Bound. Quite a vision?" he asked as he got stymied, and turned to his telautograph to demand a scenario conference immediately after lunch.

Thrilled and speechless, the author was engrossed in a vision of his own; but not about the picturization of his blended stories. He saw the vision of ham and eggs, for a long time to come.





Quickie

“Oye! Am I seek, Abe! Lissen. Jus’ stan’ still in dis theater lobby an’ lissen tuh de pipple comink from de preview. Vot a roastink our picher is gettink.”

“An’ ain’ I standink? An’ ain’ I gettink a earful. No use talkink, Morris, ve made a bloomer. Hit’s a lousy picher. Hit’s a flup!”

“Whaddya mean, lousy? Who said our picher vas a flup? Costs tuh much tuh be a flup?”



Q U I C K I E

"Yuh esk I should lissen. Den vy I shouldn't express de sentiments vot I hear a audience remark? I give hup."

"Hey! Don' give hup de ship ven de picher is sinkink. Maybe it can be fixt. Lissen, a foist preview don' mean nuttink. I gottit ideas how it can be fixt hup."

"Fixt, sure. But ve made de picher on buttons. Vot ve goink tuh use fer money? Enswerink me dot? Evertink costs money, even a button on a sut costs money."

"Don' talk in clucks an' suts. I'm already dizzy from de cost hof dis picher. Also I'm seek vit vorry, an' yuh give me riddles tuh enswer. Vot yuh chatter gives me pennisitis!"

"Vel, remember von tink. I vas against de story from de start. I said in de foist place dot de boy shouldn'ta had a sister, an' in de second place he shouldn'ta got married so soon in de foist reel."

"Marriage is a law vit censorship!"

"But a vife is no romance."

"Vot is it den?"

"It's silly!"

"More riddles!"

"Is it a riddle ven a picher is a failure?"

"Who said our picher is a failure?"

"Vel, jus' look at de pipple comink outa de theater vit upturned noses."

"I don' see any upturned noses. Anyvay, it's a cold night. Pipple are sniffin' at de air, not de picher."

"Un-huh? Maybe I'm wrong, as dey say in de comic strips!"

"You are wrong half de time. An' yuh are certainly wrong about sniffink."

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"But not about scoffink!"

"Sniffink, scoffink, no vonder I'm seek!"

"Just de same, de time has come ven ve should take de bull by de troat. I tink ve should blame somebody, an' dot somebody is de cutter."

"Nobody's tuh blame but money. If yuh got lots hof money, den yuh don't need tuh produce a picher in poverty row. If yuh haven't, yuh stay vit de small fry ducklinks."

"I'm glad dot yuh have de feelink vot I got."

"I didn't say I had de feelink yuh got. I said yuh make me dizzy, not de picher. De picher's hokay vit a bit of cuttink. Vot ve need is elimination."

"I vus tinkink of dot. Let's move on somevere."

"Sure, vot I need is to sit down. Maybe vot ve need is tuh forgit de picher. S'pose elimination is de tink, vot den?"

"Let's have a sandwich. Maybe some herrink an' a beer, den tuh bed an' hope fer inspiration."

"I don' need no inspiration tuh know dot our picher smells!"

"It don' smell so bad. A smelly picher can be fixt hup vit romance."

"Sure, if de romance don' smell."

"Don' be kittenish!"

"Say, am I kittenish ven I feel a loss comink? Go ahead, from both ears I am lissenink."

"Vil yuh lissen tuh my elimination?"

"Hokay, but elimination ain' evertink."

"Ever good film doctor says it, like ever udder doctor says it."

"Hokay, lemme havit!"

Q U I C K I E

"Lissen, I sure gottit a episode in my bean dot don' smell from old-fashioned picher stuff."

"Votsit?"

"Vel, ever picher has it a sequence dot's vallopie, yes?"

"Sure, if you can get it, an' hit's away from de censors."

"I gottit."

"Vot is it?"

"Vel, besides de surplus dot dis picher should haf a baby, vitch I von't go into now. It should have a mudder, a sister, or a vallop, yes?"

"Lemme have de vallop foist!"

"In our picher ve got a uncle, yes?"

"An' am I sorry!"

"Dot's right! Now instead of makink 'im de uncle, make 'im a Bow—a Bow Bummer. You know, nifty guy."

"How?"

"Easy. Change some of de dialogue. Ven he says 'I'm your unkie,' change it. Ven de goil says 'My unkie!' change it. Costs nuttink, almost nuttink."

"Vot does dot do?"

"Dot makes 'im a chance as a lover. More sexy, get it?"

"Morris, it smells!"

"Not so much as de whole picher business smells!"

"Maybe yuh should go back tuh de pickle business. Dot's a smelly business, an' I ain' kiddink."

"Vel, stop de kiddink! Forget de past. Vot ve goink tuh do now?"

"Here's a idea I been tinkink vile yuh been goink nuts. Let's give de picher a screwy title. Make de audience tink dey don'

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quite understand de plot, like in Berkeley Square. Den, on account of ignorance, dey don' make no visecracks tuh each udder."

"Lissens good! Already it sounds like a major picher vit *cost*."

"An' I got de title vich sounds like *class*."

"Votsit?"

"De Love Complex is a screwy title. Ain' dot a vallop?"

"Votsit mean?"

"Ah-hah! I got yuh right hof! Dot makes it hokay. Because as long as I von't tell, yuh get hot fer de plot."

"But I know our plot. It ain' so hot!"

"Vel, I can't expect tuh fool everbody."

"Besides, our plot ain' susceptible to a Berkeley Square treatment. Ours is a farce."

"You're tellink me! Are yuh tryink tuh be funny?"

"No, I'm makink reason, an' I tink I reason dot hit's better I go home, vere hit's quiet, an' get away from dis traffic."

"Me too. I feel a little seek. Maybe I'm comink down vit sometink."

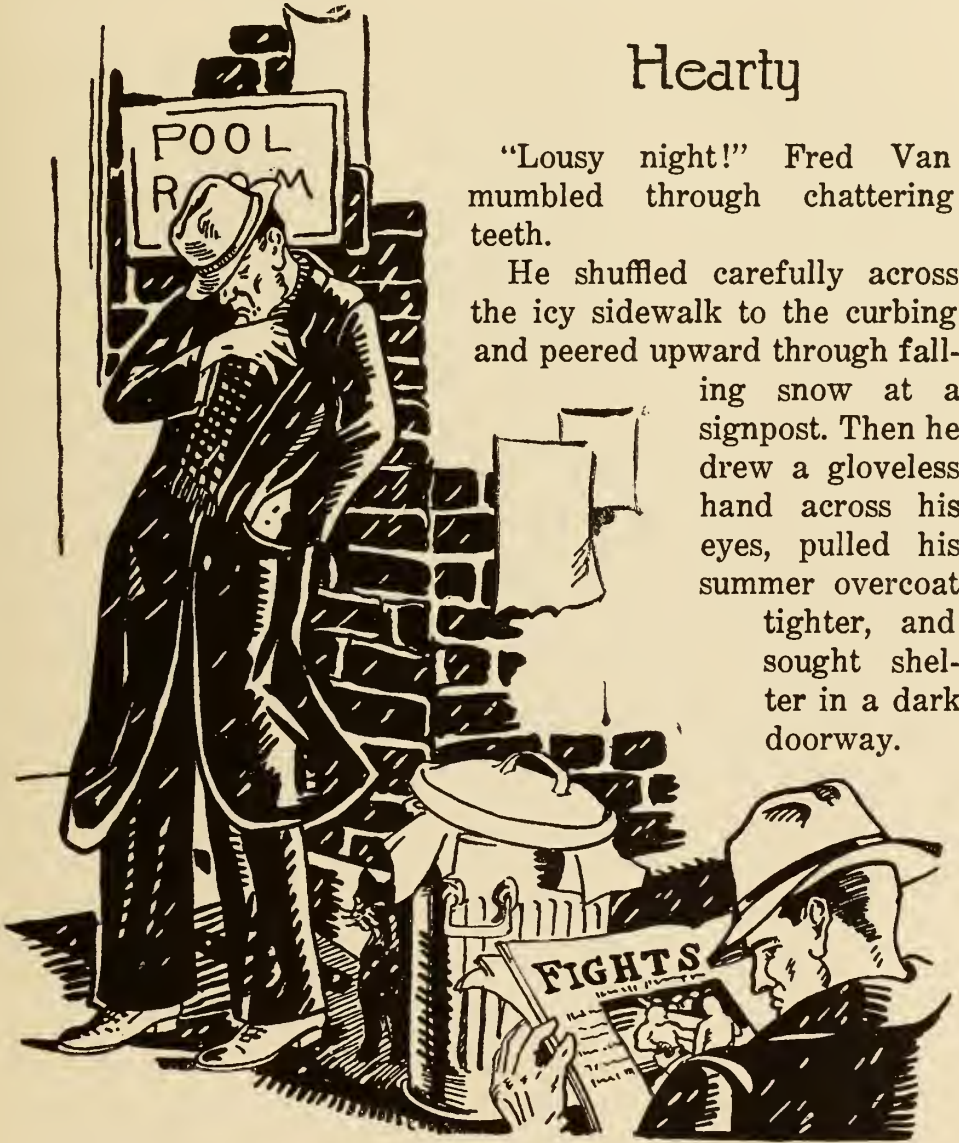
"Yeah, you're comink down vit me an' argue all night abouta treatment. De picher is de only tink vot's seek."



Hearty

"Lousy night!" Fred Van mumbled through chattering teeth.

He shuffled carefully across the icy sidewalk to the curbing and peered upward through falling snow at a signpost. Then he drew a gloveless hand across his eyes, pulled his summer overcoat tighter, and sought shelter in a dark doorway.



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"Fool!" he groaned again and again.

His lips twitched with the cold, and he beat his shoes against the brick wall to rid them of icicles, giving himself hell for buying a pack of cigarettes when it was really a bowl of soup that he needed.

Nothing short of foolhardy, he reasoned disgustedly. He should have held out at least supper money from his wager. A dollar couldn't have made much difference in his winnings, if the Kid did win. *When* the Kid won, his mind corrected quickly.

Self-censure was helping to consume his strength.

He was forty-four, and should have better sense. This eastern dampness was playing havoc with his lungs. Clear out, that's what he'd do. Right after the fight. He'd force the Kid to go to Hollywood, make a few pictures, and forget the fight game entirely.

Two men bumped each other on the slippery sidewalk.

"Goin' soft?" the fat individual kidded. "What you doin' with an umbrella, Bert? So you can't take it?"

His friend laughed. "Can't take it? That's how I got it! You look hearty enough, George," he complimented and disappeared in the night.

"Hearty!" Fred Van grunted.

That's what he desired most. Then to block out unhealthy thoughts, he took inventory.

He had trained Kid Royal right up to the moment, gave him last-minute instructions, and put him on the train for Newark. He couldn't stand seeing the fight from the ringside. Besides, his presence might make the Kid nervous. There was too much

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at stake. He wanted to listen to the fight over the radio, when he got nerve enough to enter the poolroom again.

Quickly speculating why it was that he could not bring himself to act just as he used to do, when he had plenty of jack, he was answered as rapidly. His appearance reflected nil in the mirror of men's eyes. The poolroom manager might class him as a bum if he was seen hanging around that radiator, and might demand his exit. Too near being the truth.

And so his mind argued on until aching toes made a decision for him.

Moving along the edge of the building carefully, he wiped his coat sleeve across the frosted glass window and peered into the poolroom. Through the steamy surface, he saw that the place was filling up. Fourteen minutes to eight, said the wall clock.

His aching body informed him that he would have to chance results.

Act natural, that's what he'd do. Just as he used to do when searching for a favorite billiard partner. Then he'd casually ease over by the radiator.

With a firm decision, he descended three steps and flung the door open with the air of a millionaire. But his attitude was ephemeral. A terrific north wind blew the door from his grasp, and it rebounded instantly, striking him a severe blow. His icy heels flew from under him, and the next moment he was sprawled on the floor under a pool table.

Spasmodic laughter echoed in his ears. Banalities were hurled at the prostrate figure. But when Fred Van remained inert on the floor, human nature changed quickly. Flippancies

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were replaced by kind remarks. Players left their games quickly to render aid.

"Shorty!" the manager's crisp voice rang out. "Get a cushion outa my office and place a chair by the radiator for this guy."

The royal treatment continued. Shorty and the manager rested Fred Van in a chair like a babe, leaning over him as attentively as relatives saying "goo!"

Fred Van shuddered when he revived too quickly, for he heard the manager yell for Shorty to get him a billiard partner, and saw him scowl suspiciously when Fred declined to play.

"Hey, buddy!" Fred called to the nearest table. "What's the latest odds on Kid Royal?" he asked like a gambler.

The boy laughed derisively.

"On Alex Car, you mean," the youth returned cockily. "He stands to win in a push-over. Better romp with class instead of has-beens!"

Mentally scoffing at the advice, Fred Van began calculations upon his possible winnings, but superstition caused him to desist as quickly.

Suddenly the radio loud speaker rasped: "Nemos Canned Chicken hour, friends. Presenting baritone Harry La Var, who will sing a group of three: I'm Sittin' Pretty, California Here I Come, and I've Got You in the Palm of My Hand."

All good omens, Fred said in his heart, but the name of the radio hour disturbed his stomach intensely. For consolation, he lit a cigarette, visioning dollar signs in the smoke rings he blew easily into the air. Gradually he dozed into unconsciousness.

A radio announcer's voice shot new life into him.

"And Kid Royal," the loud speaker heralded, "is climbing

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through the ropes into the ring. Newark fans are razzing him about the loud color of his trunks and bathrobe. Goodnaturedly he waves at the audience and skips over to the rosin box. The front-row boys are laughing at his antics. He entertains with a few tap steps on the rosin. However, I must say that he looks very fit. Now he's off for his corner. Seems to have plenty of life, and he's reduced palpably since we last saw him. Well, hi-ho, perhaps he'll surprise us."

Grunting approval, Fred Van sat up in his chair.

"The Kid, you know," the announcer informed glibly, "has lost a great deal of his popularity since his former victories over two years ago here in Newark. No accounting for that, however. Fight fans are fickle. Just a moment. Oh, it was a little rumpus in his corner about his stool. Didn't set even enough for him. He's adjusting it now to his liking while the fans boo at his superstitious actions. I don't see the Kid's trainer, Fred Van. He's probably out, laying some late money on the line. It was Van, you know, who thought that he could bring Kid Royal back with this bout. Well, he brought him back as far as Newark, at least."

To keep from being recognized in the poolroom, Fred Van pulled his hat farther down over his eyes and his coat collar higher about his neck.

"Oh, oh!" the announcer shouted. "Here comes the favorite fighter. Alex Car is coming down the aisle toward the ring like a nimble shadow. Listen to the fans cheer him! Alex is wearing white trunks with a blue and red sash. Maybe he's gone American! These fighters certainly like their color mixed hot. Alex jumps through the ropes like a pole vaulter. He's shaking

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his clasped hands toward the galleries. Now he's exchanging remarks with the reporters over the ropes, in the front row. It seems that they're kidding him about his bathrobe. Boy, is it loud! Looks like an awning, I heard someone crack a moment ago.

"Kid Royal is glaring enviously across the arena at Alex. It was only a few months ago that Kid Royal had all the attention, as you remember. Well, things change fast in the fight game. Up today and down tomorrow. Oh, oh! Just a little nifty of my own. Pardon my Southern accent, friends. I'm trying to fill in a little while we're getting ready to go places with this bout."

With a sneer in his heart, Fred Van gritted his teeth and gave the announcer a silent raspberry.

"Hear that laughter, friends?" the announcer spouted. "Alex Car sat down without looking, and missed the stool. He fell through the ropes. Boy, he'll have to counteract that flop with a knockout. Both boys are seated now, receiving the usual massaging from their attendants. Kid Royal's chief attendant is whispering something in his ear. He'll need all the advice he can get when he mixes with Alex.

"Alex Car, as you may be informed, has won some excellent matches in this last few— Oh, oh! Did you hear that laughter? Alex's attendant did something which called for a biff. Alex hit him harder than he intended. He's apologizing. Alex is sorry, and we know the attendant is.

"Kid Royal is smiling over at them. Swell of the Kid, after the streak of hard luck which has followed him lately. Swell that he can smile at all, I mean. And here they go, folks. The fighters

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are called to the center of the ring for last instructions. The Kid looks alert. Alex is a little too sure of himself, if anything. I'll turn the microphone over now to Wayne Ripley, who will describe the bout to you blow by blow, and round by round as only he can. The great Ripley!"

"Good evening, fans. Wayne Ripley announcing. The boys are returning to their corners now. They look hearty and hale, and I might say— There's the gong! The fight is on!"

Fred Van stared up at the loud speaker as if he could see the arena.

"The boys touch gloves," Ripley continued in his rapid manner. "They dance about a bit—sort of a hello gesture. A nice gentle beginning, so to speak. Maybe I'm wrong. They exchanged about six or eight heavy punches while I was cracking wise. And some more like them are raining. A little heavy for a first-round opening. Well, well, we shall see. Both boys have stopped dancing now. Alex has moved right in with some pretty hard blows. The Kid is cagey. He backs away nicely. No harm done. They both mean business, however. And they clinch. They are parted by the referee. They clinch again. They break of their own accord. Fast body punches are raining thick and weighty. Pretty speedy for a first round, I should say."

The fast first-round action caused Fred Van's heart to pound. Those were his instructions to the Kid. Fast in the first, to show the fans that he was his old self again.

"They're pounding each other like piledrivers. This is the fastest first round that I can remember. The Kid has received many blows on the mouth. It is bleeding quite a bit. Alex divides his attention between straight lefts to the jaw and ter-

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rible body punches which seem to fall short of the stomach and hit the Kid's chest. Too high for the wind, but they are plenty hard. The Kid's chest is already red from the onslaught. There's the gong! The first round ends furiously. Both boys are panting terribly as they sink on their stools. The bell was welcome to both of them."

Fred Van was happy. The Kid had carried out his instructions perfectly: gain respect of the fans quickly and surprise Alex Car into changing his attack. With relief, the trainer pulled his hat off and wiped his moist brow. His tension recurred on hearing the announcer shout: "The gong!"

"Round two of the Kid Royal and Alex Car bout at Newark, New Jersey. Ripley announcing. The boys have jumped right into the fray with renewed strength. They both pound hard. The Kid at the jaw. Alex is hammering body punches. So far, Alex hasn't a mark on him. Kid Royal has his right eye patched up a little. His lips are swollen twice their normal size. Wow! While I was rambling on, Alex took a few lefts which made him shake his head to clear the dizziness. He spits a little blood. Must have a loose tooth. The crowd is cheering. They appreciate the Kid's efforts. He's winning back a lot of his lost respect in this match."

In the poolroom, the trainer sat up with pride. His heart beat with elation. With every blow that his boy landed on the opponent, he added to it with mental strength of his own, accompanying them with grunts and little jerks of his whole body.

One by one the pool enthusiasts left their games to hover closer around the loud speaker, commenting on the speed of the first round and placing side bets quickly on Kid Royal.

"Alex has the Kid in a corner!" the announcer exclaimed

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excitedly. "Ah, the Kid shows his clever training in getting out in a moment. Alex is following up, however, with those awful body punches. Heavy ones, staggering the Kid whenever they land solidly. Swell! The Kid retaliates with jaw punches."

As one in the throes of a nightmare, Fred Van helped his boy with the jaw punches. Unconsciously, he was fighting the bout himself. His whole body was exuding perspiration.

"Alex is pounding the Kid's body hard. It looks red around the heart, but the Kid stays with jaw punches. Alex feels them too. He spits blood occasionally. Left, right, left, right. Alex landed four heavy jabs on the Kid's middle. He has him against the ropes. Kid Royal is breathing hard from the effect of those body punches. He's clever though. He ducked out into the center of the ring again. The crowd is yelling like they were mad. Oh, swell! Kid Royal is showing fans what good training can do. If you ask me, he's outpointing Alex Car."

Proudly accepting the compliment, Fred Van was absorbed. He took every body punch his boy took, and retaliated, with power, when the Kid did.

"The crowd is going crazy! Hear that yelling? The Kid slipped! Alex has been rushing him for the last ten seconds, giving the Kid no time to relax, hammering body punches. The Kid is weakening a bit, it seems. Playing for time, perhaps. Hoping for the bell. Alex is after him every second. Oh, folks, I just tumbled to his big idea. Alex isn't playing for the stomach as I presumed. He's pounding at the Kid's heart! Remember? Kid Royal was supposed to have a weak heart ever since that bout last winter with Eddie Schambly. Boy, Alex is pounding at his heart, with no let-up. The Kid is growing weaker and

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weaker. His chest is very red. Looks like the Kid can't take it. Those punches are terrible. The Kid is breathing in gasps! His body is sagging. He grabs for the ropes. Alex is following him up with lightning blows at the heart. He keeps at the heart! Boy! After one uppercut on the chin, he returns to the heart, pummeling like a triphammer. The Kid is sinking! The Kid is falling! He has no strength at all. He clinches. He's holding onto Alex desperately to get away from those awful heart punches. He's sliding down Alex's body—to one knee—now the other. The referee is counting. His knees won't support him. He sinks to the floor. Alex steps away while the referee counts. The Kid has no life in him. Listen to the referee count: six, seven, eight, nine, ten!

"Alex Car wins! The referee is holding up his arm—the symbol of victory. The crowd is going wild! Listen to them roar! Listen to the whistling above the cries! Alex was certainly the stronger—faster—in better shape, also. Kid Royal is certainly out. They're trying to lift him to his stool, but his body sags like a rag doll! There's no life left in him. They're lifting him through the ropes. The doctor is following as they carry him down the aisle. Looks serious. Well, it was a clean knockout for anybody's money.

"Two policemen have climbed into the ring to keep the fans away from Alex Car. Alex is smiling, waving to the galleries. Everyone seems to be trying to get into the ring to shake hands with the victor. Alex doesn't seem to be a bit fatigued now. The gang are lionizing him. They'll sure idolize him if he gets to be Champ."

There was a bedlam of excitement in the poolroom. En-

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thusiasts were collecting side-bet winnings. In running to the manager's office to make change, Shorty discovered Fred Van limp on the floor.

"Hey, Boss!" he cried. "This guy's out! Sick or somethin'. Fell outa his chair!"

The manager pulled at two sleeve holders, bit at his cigar, and commanded: "Some of you guys help Shorty carry him in here to my couch. Ed! Telephone the doc at the hotel."

Pool players hovered about the door of the office until the manager shouted:

"Scram. Here comes the doc. Doc, this guy fell outa his chair. He doesn't seem to breathe. Whatsit, do you think?"

"Tell you in a minute," the doctor assured, opening his satchel to secure his stethoscope. "From the color about his mouth, the case looks 'hearty' to me."

Shorty hammered on the glass door of the office. "Hey, Boss! Listen to the announcement over the radio."

"We are informed that Kid Royal, who was knocked out in the second round of a prizefight at Newark, New Jersey, hasn't regained consciousness up to the moment of this broadcast. Another item of news is—"

With a futile expression on his face, the doctor rose from examining Fred Van's body. "He must have received a great shock," he diagnosed. "Quite a sudden one. The man is dead!"

The manager puffed at his cigar meditatively.

"Poor guy," he sympathized. "He stumbled and fell when he entered here about an hour ago."

"No," the doctor informed wisely. "It's some shock which he has suffered in the last few minutes."

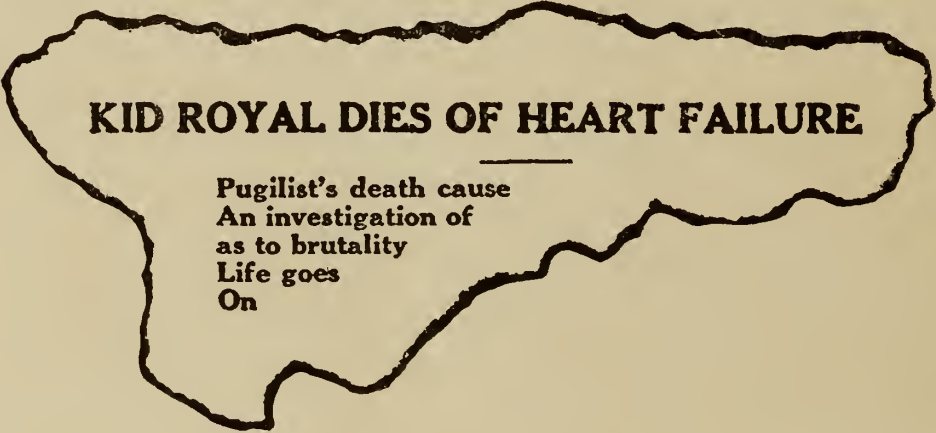
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After a careful scrutiny of Fred Van's face, the manager exchanged understanding glances with Shorty.

At an early hour the next day, the two were sitting in the warm confines of the poolroom. Shorty was nervously waiting for the sport sheet of the newspaper the manager was perusing.

"What's it say, Boss? Lemme have a look? Can I have the sheet next?"

With a clowning air and a chuckle, the manager tore a zig-zag piece from the edition, handing it to him as one feeds a puppy. It read:



KID ROYAL DIES OF HEART FAILURE

**Pugilist's death cause
An investigation of
as to brutality
Life goes
On**



SOUND AND SILENCE

Sound and Silence

"Don't fight! Please, for my sake, don't fight!"

The lovely Millie was screaming it at two suitors scrambling about her expensively decorated apartment.

Harry Lane yelled, "I'll rub you out, you rat!" and meant it.

Around and around the room they fought, slipping upon the loose rugs and well-polished parquet. Hankard had insulted Millie, and Harry Lane demanded satisfaction.

A left, a right, an uppercut, and several fast jabs caused a



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hurried retreat; and in a few moments, Hankard found himself staggering on the blue tile of the bathroom.

Crashing glass on the floor told the story of an overturned dressing table with all its feminine accessories.

"Oh, my perfume!" Millie screamed in protest. "My imported perfume. Oh, my Night in Paris! My Night! My Night!"

If, in the fifteenth century, a maiden had shouted the word *night*, however spelled, it might have been an urge to manhood. But there was no mistaking Millie's meaning. She ran to the bathroom door to watch the precious liquid slushing across the tile under belligerent feet.

The word *night* may not have impressed Hankard's mind, but Millie's presence did, goading him on toward victory. His powerful body punches sent his opponent backward into the living room. Through the tail of his eye, he sensed that Millie sympathized with him. That inspiration caused him to foul Harry, sending the man reeling into the fireplace.

Harry hurled a fire-iron. Dodging, Hankard retaliated with a vase. The vase was successfully ducked, but the water drenched Harry, and the roses made a ludicrous wreath about his neck.

Harry rushed in, as infuriated as a bull, intent on a quick finish. The impact of their bodies sent both inelegantly to the floor. On finding himself sitting on Hankard's neck, Harry burst forth with a vocal noise unbecoming to any leading man, and rolled over on the floor to give vent to vociferous laughter.

"Cut!" the director cried. "Cut the scene! We'll have to remake it. There's no hope of keeping any part of that in the picture. Besides, I want a better scene—all through."

The chief electrician yelled: "Kill 'em!"

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Photographing lamps were extinguished; work lights burned pale in contrast. The assistant looked questioningly, which prompted the script girl to announce:

“Scene 183. Take 2 coming up.”

“Gimme a reload,” the cameraman grunted, and opened the box, awaiting film. Then he pressed a button.

The exterior red light was extinguished. Two short whistle blasts rang out, and the huge sliding doors were thrown open for the entrance of cool air.

“So it wasn’t real enough, eh?” Hankard asked sheepishly, while the prop man used a whiskbroom on his dress coat.

The director smiled, stretched himself, threw his manu-



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script onto his canvas chair, and sauntered toward the erring actors.

"Wrong!" he answered. "That's the trouble. It was too real, including the flowers," he kidded. "Now I suppose if I were in such a situation, I'd throw anything I could get my hands on. It's rapid action that makes a fight look interesting on the screen, not reality. I told you to ad lib, but I didn't tell you to throw roses at Harry and make him look like Queen of the May."

Goodnaturally he pulled the flowers from Harry Lane's neck and ordered him to change linen.

"Prop!" he shouted. "Get a new vase to break. Eliminate the roses, clean this mess up, and we'll go again as soon as Harry changes his dress shirt and collar. Hey! Stand-by! Straighten the rugs, wipe the floor with your whatsit—I couldn't say mop. I think this scene's got me punch drunk."

Smiling and wisecracking in order to cheer Millie, he rambled on foolishly.



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“Yes, sir! Our hero mustn’t be too gentle. Nature in the raw—that’s him. And without the danger line, or that tired feeling, pink toothbrush, or—hey! Somebody stop me before I break down.”

Everyone laughed to please the director.

The tension was broken. The electricians relaxed, the cameraman relaxed, the assistant relaxed, the script girl relaxed—all watching the mop as Props shoved it to and fro over the imitation hardwood floor.

Harry Lane went for a change. The script girl went for coffee. The assistant went for the script girl.

The tension was broken for everyone but Millie. Unable to relax, she felt her blood pressure running higher as lightning thoughts shot through her brain as to how to better her part of the scene.

Her first role. Not so large, but vitally important to her. She stood to lose terrifically if she did not achieve. The thought of probably being shoved back into the extra class loomed like a hideous nightmare, horribly humiliating.

How to do more? How to do more, she argued frantically. Why didn’t ideas flow to her as they did to other actors? Of course, experience was the answer, she thought hatefully. The lack of it in her case. She had been picked for her beauty. Was she beautiful but dumb? Perhaps she was. What could they all possibly be thinking concerning her? Those cursory glances from the director while talking privately to Hankard—what could they mean?

“My lord!” she mumbled. “My hand are perspiring. I feel dizzy. What a brain storm. I must try to appear calm.”

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With a loud laugh, the director swung away from Hankard and sauntered toward Millie.

The thing to do is to ask him how I might improve the scene. No, no, she quickly argued with herself. That would be dumb. I might say the wrong thing if I talk. Yes, silence is golden. What a quotation to remember. I'll say nothing at all. Yes, that's a firm decision: say nothing.

As his figure came closer and closer, the director loomed like a giant ready to devour. His dark glasses made him seem more hideous, making her heart go pitty-pat.

She'd just smile, that was all. Or perhaps, if she spoke at all, she'd say that she was nervously interested. She had heard an actress use the expression once. Yes, that—

"Now what are you frightened about?" the director said in gentle tones. "What's on your mind? Shall I answer for you?"

Taking a deep breath, Millie parted her lips in an artificial smile.

"Don't be frightened. Everything you did was just as I directed. When we retake the scene, repeat exactly. You know I chose you because you looked the part so perfectly."

He thinks I'm dumb, Millie thought. The hurt in her heart sent resentful throbs throughout her body, making her ears ring. Then, through the director's sentences, she interwove thoughts which cut as they rebounded.

"Now don't try to act. *He thinks I can't.* Just be natural; you look the part. *Yes, beautiful but dumb.* I know how to spot you. *He's just tolerating me.* And I'll send the others to lunch while we are working out the close-ups together. *He's disgusted.* And they won't be around to bother. How's that now? Does

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that make you feel better?"

"Thank you," she managed with effort. "Only—"

"Only what?"

Millie forgot her promise to herself. Forgot the quotation about how golden silence was.

"You've told me what to do up to the end of the fight," she blurted out anxiously.

"That's right."

"Well, at the end, when Harry takes me in his arms, I'm certain that I know how to show that I like him, but how do I register the fact that Harry likes me?"

The director bit his lip a little.

"Don't you think that you'd better let Harry attend to that?" he advised. With tongue in cheek, he left the stage to give vent to laughter, privately.

The wheeze was just too good to keep. By one o'clock the Masquers Club had heard it, and by evening the whole colony knew about the young thing who wanted to play both parts.

The director was something of a louse to tell it; but it didn't matter. Before long Millie was a star and told the story freely on herself.



Windows

Windows, windows, nothing but windows up and down the narrow hotel court. He had sat counting them many times lately, during the long hours of waiting for a telephone call from Central Casting Office.

But the waiting was all over now. Thoughts of a possible career had faded. He would have to seek employment at anything he could find. This was the end.

Momentarily his eyes rested on the lighted window straight across the court—her window. He had never met the occupant of that apartment, but had often gazed into the windows from the dark recesses of his own room. Not a nice thing to do; yet his actions were not those of a peeping Tom. They were more like a Romeo, with Romeo's mood and lines:

"O that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!"

Just now, he saw his dream girl move into view to answer her telephone. "Tomorrow," he read easily on her lips, and from her expansive frown, realized that the single word did not satisfy the party on the other end of the wire.

Quite distraught, she started pacing the floor, twisting her handkerchief, seeming ready to burst into tears.

He could not summon any pity for her. His own troubles surmounted any that another human could possibly have. No one could be placed in the same miserable, deplorable condition as he.

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The girl's pacing and turning afforded clear scrutiny of her beauty. Jet-black hair fell in fluffy waves over a well-chiseled brow, crowning a lovely face with glory. He sensed long lashes, veiling eyes that he felt sure were golden brown. Too thin a figure, he criticised unconsciously.

Stopping abruptly in her pacing, the girl lifted her head haughtily and said: "Come in."

The door swung open, revealing the clerk. He carried a bunch of keys, and ordered the emotional girl into the hall.

The eviction made the boy's blood run cold. Grabbing several envelopes, he rushed out to the mail chute, and stood as if occupied, to listen.

"But had I only known," he heard his dream girl plead.

"You can't tell me that the manager hasn't warned you many times," the clerk insisted, demanding her key. "Six o'clock tonight was the limit of his endurance, he told me to inform you. I do hope you will understand that this duty is painful to me," he concluded, bolted the door, and left the evicted girl crying against the wall like a child locked in a closet.

Edging very close, the sympathetic boy stammered: "May I—could I be of any assistance?"

She looked up through moist eyes which he saw were hazel.

"I suppose almost anyone in the world could," the girl mumbled through a damp handkerchief. "I've just been locked out in the hall from all my earthly possessions. One can't blame the management. The story is simple: an unpaid bill, long overdue." She sighed. "You know, I've always been able to laugh things off. I can't seem to any more. I guess this is the last laugh."

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"Sure, that's the thing to do. I always laugh things off," he lied. "Now come into my room until you get yourself collected. Bathe your eyes and you'll feel better."

Presently she emerged from his bathroom with clear-washed eyes and took a chair opposite him. Feeling stymied for conversation, she scanned the room.

"Surely this can't be your apartment," she speculated. "It seems empty."

"It is empty of everything but furniture. This room is mine until morning. All my things are next door. I have a few hours of grace in which to make a payment on my bill—or else. I'm locked out too."

Her eyes welled up again, met his, and fluttered down to her feet.

"What a plight," she breathed and sighed softly.

In a moment she rallied.

"That's my room across the court. I see the window is partly raised." With a faint smile, she said: "We might make a human bridge, if we had someone to walk across. I saw Tom Mix do that stunt once."

For a brief moment he basked in her weak smile, then took his hat, and moved toward the hall door. "Well, goodbye. I've wanted to meet you for a long time, tremendously, I mean. But I'm sorry it had to occur under such circumstances."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know," he answered too quickly.

"Just what do you mean? Do you imply that you are going to sleep in a park somewhere? Listen, this is too much chivalry. Be sensible, or I won't accept your hospitality."

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"You wouldn't think of going?"

"I will if you don't stop being foolish. Say, this is like being shipwrecked! I'll coil up here on the divan and hope that sometime before dawn I can think of somebody to whom I can send an SOS."

"No, you take the bed. I'll use the divan."

"I'm the guest. I use the divan or—"

"Guess that finishes that. And I guess you're tired and don't want to talk. So I'll pull this screen in front of you," he suggested and was sorry.

He took plenty of time tugging at a tall screen. When she remained silent, he was forced to do as he had outlined.

For a while, he paced the floor on his side of the wide screen, and at length flung himself upon the bed. Muffling his anguish with the thickness of the pillow, he cursed the luck that had followed him like a hungry animal, and the fiend that had mocked him in presenting his dream girl as a guest when he was powerless to render aid.

Thoughts came and went in a throbbing brain, continually forming a hideous, futile circle, ever-ending at the same miserable, impotent starting point.

Hours passed.

A soft voice from out of the darkness whispered: "Are you asleep?"

Happily, he answered in the negative, with a note of inquiry in his voice.

She cut the darkness with her tones of inspiration.

"I'll have to give up picture work, for a while at least," she outlined. "So I've been thinking of a possible job. Recently a

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friend drove me through the country, and strange to say, I now remember a sign which read: ORANGE PICKERS WANTED. It was at a place called Sunkist Farm. I'm sure it would be listed in the telephone book. Have you a nickel?"

"No," he replied in anguish. "The last dime I had went for what I called *dinner*. Did you have dinner?"

She ignored his question.

"Do you suppose that they would allow a call to slip through from this room?" she mumbled hopefully.

"No. But if you wait until six o'clock when the day operator comes on, she won't know immediately about our situation. Such a job would be a miracle," he concluded, thinking aloud.

"Lord!" she moaned.

"What?"

"I just thought of the fact that it'll take bus fare to get there, if they do say they want help. I haven't at my disposal the Rolls I was riding in, nor the friend."

"I'll think—"

"I hope you can. I've thunk my last think. It's all worn out upstairs."

Long hours of thinking, and rolling and tossing without thinking, brought a reward of unconsciousness.

Dawn faded into the heavens. Then a rising sun splashed against court windows, reflecting into a room where inspiration was needed, and as if receiving it on a sunbeam which touched his brow, the boy catapulted acrobatically out of bed.

"What is it?" the girl gasped, and whispered: "The manager?"

W I N D O W S

“No. An inspiration!”

“Don’t talk in riddles!”

“Look! By taking this screen and placing it lengthwise on my window sill, it will reach over to yours. Think what that makes! Think!”

“The kink in my neck won’t allow thinking. What does it make?”

“It makes a bridge. At last I can do something that will aid you. I’ll crawl over to your room for some of your things. What do you need most?”

With wide-eyed appreciation, she started enumerating necessities until futility swamped her.

“But what of it?” she groaned. “They won’t allow me to carry anything out of the hotel.”

“You don’t carry anything. Your frocks are flimsy; put two or three on under what you’re wearing. There’s the telephone book. While I’m doing this stunt, you put a call through to that ranch. See if they want two—two of whatever they want any of,” he stammered, dragging the screen to the window.

“My largest purse,” she whispered. “Cram all you can into it.”

In return, he whispered: “Don’t open that hall door until I crawl in again, no matter who knocks.”

With the speed of a stunt man, he was soon squeezing his way back through the window, holding a bundle of dresses and a large purse which bulged like a frightened cat.

“They do!” the girl exclaimed over and over again. “They still want orange pickers, both men and women. Imagine the luck. The call went through without a hitch. Do you realize

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

that you have a job? Oh, but it's miles and miles from here. Where will we ever get bus fare? What a—"

His strange appearance compelled her.

"Where did you get that overcoat you have on?"

"In my room next door. I went Tom Mix one better. I was my own bridge and hero combined. Look, got my studs too! I can pawn them. There's our bus fare! So it's goodbye Hollywood, hello ranch." With a broad grin, he tossed her the bundle of clothes and naively advised: "Put on your trousseau, mama."

With the ecstasy of released prisoners, they were soon walking through the lobby, passing the clerk stealthily. Elegantly they passed the sleepy bellboy on the bench, and went out through the hotel portals like tourists, into the refreshing air of a new day.

Half-way down the block, she scrutinized her escort, noting his peculiar stride.

"My, you look large. It must be that thick overcoat."

"Don't be silly," he said elatedly. "I've got three suits of clothes on under it."



An Actress and How

Back in Indianapolis, Grace Nome made the mistake of stating that she wanted to be an actress the worst way. The remark caused so much kidding that it ultimately drove her to Hollywood.

Three days in the film city brought discouragement. She emerged from a studio casting office with a weaker desire to show the folks back home.

"It's tough that there isn't any work," a youth whispered while making an exit from the same building. "Well, don't let it get you down," he concluded with a weak smile.

"Oh, I'll be all right," Grace brightened confidently. "I'm predestined, if you know what I mean."

Lifting his eyebrows, the boy grimaced and mumbled: "Yes, I've heard the expression before."

The strident noise of bad brakes impinged on their ears, and a dilapidated Ford vibrated inelegantly to the curb before them.

"Hi, Harry!" the occupant shouted. "Here comes Personality Jimmie!" Bounding from the car, a boy thumbed six tickets, then kidded brazenly: "Oh, oh, didn't mean to muscle in. Why, Harry, were you with this young lady?"

His friend turned to the strange girl.

"Guess you'll have to help me out, Miss—Miss—"

"Grace Nome is my name."

"Mine is Harry Wyatt, and this would-be comic intruder is Jimmie Hagel. Don't mind him. He's a nut, a goof, and a swell guy all rolled into one. He swears he's funny—you know, funny like a comedian."

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

Jimmie guffawed. "Why, I'm a comic, and you know it."

"Don't flatter yourself. You haven't even got a one-day job."

"Yeah, but I'm on my way to Paramount with hope and—"

"Oh," Grace broke in, "will you tell me the location of the Paramount Studios?"

"Hop in, Miss Nome. If you can stand this rattletrap fliv of mine, be there in three or four minutes. The ol' buggy's perky, has the shakes, but it's sure."

"I don't want to intrude."

"No trouble. Just look at that Class A car, rarin' to go! No foolin', it has Class A inscribed on the motor. Just let me introduce you to the Baron. Hi, Baron, this is Miss Nome. Miss Nome—the Baron. Barren of polish, barren of paint, barren of—"

"I can't take it!" Harry groaned. "Jimmie, not in my financial mood. I'll ride with you, if you'll promise not to pun."

"Not a pun in a carload. Hop in. I promise to keep the trap closed until I get a refusal from Paramount."

In a few moments the three were crammed into the almost unupholstered seat, jogging zigzag and bouncy along Hollywood Boulevard. Eying the blonde beside him, Jimmie voiced his thoughts.

"You're new, aren't you, Miss Nome? Haven't seen you around on the daily hunt. Bucking this extra list is tough sleddin'. What luck do you expect to have in the big bad film city?"

"Don't answer him, Miss Nome. He's crazy. Now, Jimmy, tell me why you rushed up with all that enthusiasm about tickets? What were they for?"

"The gamblin' joint that's openin' tonight. I got six. Every-

AN ACTRESS AND HOW

body'll be there, 'cause they know the police won't let it stay open long. I'm makin' up a party. Wanna go?"

"Nope, no shekels to spare."

"You don't need any dough. It's on the house. How 'bout you, Miss Nome? Wanna join us? Good way to meet the big shots."

"N-no, th-thanks."

Jimmie laughed hoarsely.

"Only Harry and I can talk in this flivver. See," he demonstrated, "you gotta relax your jaw or you'll bite your tongue. And here we are, folks, rollin' up to Paramount Studios in state—in state of hope or in hope of state. Anyway, in hope. Listen to them brakes! I think I'll start a brake band and star on the radio."

"Please don't pun!" Harry pleaded. "Have a heart, Jimmie. I need work. Puns won't cheer me up."

The car stopped abruptly with a recoil that sent the three into a scrimmage.

"Time out for Harvard!" Jimmie yelled, and whistled like a football coach. "Out you come, you stowaways! Give the Baron a rest while we see if Mrs. Paramount will dole out nice jobs for three."

With a laugh, he mocked their sad expressions.

"Hey, both of you, smile!" he urged. "Don't take job hunting so seriously. It got me down once. Come on, give in! Smile, pray, and enter, or pray, smile, and enter, anyway, pray!"

Presently the three were back on the sidewalk again. Two were as dejected as loiterers.

"Am I sore at Mrs. Paramount? Am I sore!" Jimmie

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

kidded for cheering purposes. "Anyway, folks, you know things don't go on like this forever. No, they get worse. Now listen, you two," he demanded seriously. "Don't let job hunting get you down. What you both need is a few laughs and to shuffle yourself a new deal. Better join us, Miss Nome. Step out with us tonight. Meet the best—meet the celebrities at play."

Addresses and telephone numbers were exchanged. The hour was set for midnight.

Midnight, Grace thought several times while dressing. Her friends back in Iowa were well on their way home from a social function at such an hour. Tonight she was to mingle with stars and producers. She certainly was progressing. At such a rate she'd be an actress in—well, at least she was stepping along speedily.

Shortly after midnight, Jimmie's party of six heard the weight of a heavy door being bolted behind them and saw rows of crap, roulette, and card tables as they were ushered to a room where a dance floor was surrounded by drinking booths.

After craning her neck for a glimpse of the elite, Grace whispered coyly to Harry.

"How many stars do you think will appear?" she gushed.

"None," Harry returned confidently.

"Surely you're joking!"

"Maybe you're ribbing me. Say, didn't you really tumble to this racket?"

"Racket?"

"Yes. Jimmie's just a roustabout for this place. You know, drummin' up business. As far as we're concerned, why, it's all

AN ACTRESS AND HOW

for a few drinks, a few laughs, and to forget our troubles. Jimmie told you it was a joint, or are you kidding me?"

"You mean that Jimmie's nothing but a—"

"Now don't get me wrong. Jimmie's a swell person. He's a clown for any of his friends who are down with the depression. He's trying to keep from starving too, you know. So he'll keep at this racket until he lands a decent job."

"But why did you say *roustabout*?"

"My error. I thought you got it. Well, we're in evening clothes. Nobody else is, you notice. Bellhops and taxi drivers tell the tourists where they may find the stars at the old night life. So they come here, and when they see extras like us all dolled up, they think they're looking at celebrities. The waiters have probably given your name out as Lilly Gilch, explaining that you're a new find at the So-and-so Studios. Then the saps come again and again, thinking that they'll eventually run into their favorites. Get it? It's the jolly ol' merry-go-round!"

A sickly smile faded over Grace Nome's face. Then the color left it. She sat glumly, feeling that an evening had been wasted with her career no farther advanced.

Suddenly a window crashed, then another. Instantly the lights went out. Three pistol shots resounded, and bottles began crashing against the walls. In terrorizing tones, a female voice cried: "Raid!"

After a death-like silence, flashlights flared in every corner. Disgustedly a commanding voice yelled:

"Everybody come out from under them tables and sit where you was till I check yuh! Okay, the lights!" he prompted.

Gradually emerging from a fainting spell, Grace heard

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

Jimmie's kind voice consoling her, and felt the cool, wet napkin which he had been applying to her forehead and wrists. Very conscious of harsh tones demanding her name and profession caused her to blurt out:

"Grace Nome. Motion pictures."

"Aw, what made you tell him, kid?" Jimmie crabbed. "He's only a reporter."

Lights began flaring, flooding the room again. An officer moved alongside the booth and recognized Jimmie.

"You're excused!" he ordered. "Get your party out of here."

Early next morning, Grace was startled to hear Jimmie's apologetic voice on her telephone.

"Sorry about last night, kid. My fault for gettin' you into print."

"In print?" she gasped. "What do you mean?"

"Haven't you seen the morning papers? Terrible! Can I bring 'em up to you?"

"Yes, hurry!"

Ages seemed to pass until Jimmie burst through her apartment door and sheepishly spread the front-page news before her.

"Don't know what I can ever do to make up for this," he grumbled sincerely.

As if unable to look at the headlines with her, Jimmie retired to the window, looking out on a hateful world.

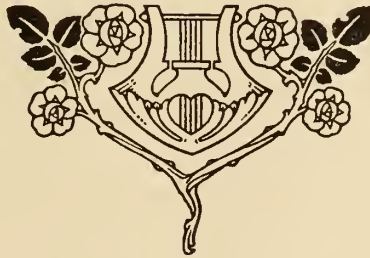
With increasing interest, Grace read the story of her fame in bold, black type:

AN ACTRESS AND HOW

ACTRESS FAINTS AS POLICE RAID GAMBLING JOINT

In the "wee sma'" hours, as Hollywood's good citizens were sleeping, the police raided a new rendezvous, finding filmdom at play. Grace Nome, well-known actress in motion pictures, danced upon a gin-soaked table while officers tried to . . .

Quite unable to believe what she read, Grace lifted her eyes to Jimmie for additional truth, astonishing him with her attitude. "At last! At last!" she cried. "I *am* an actress!" The press had proclaimed her one.



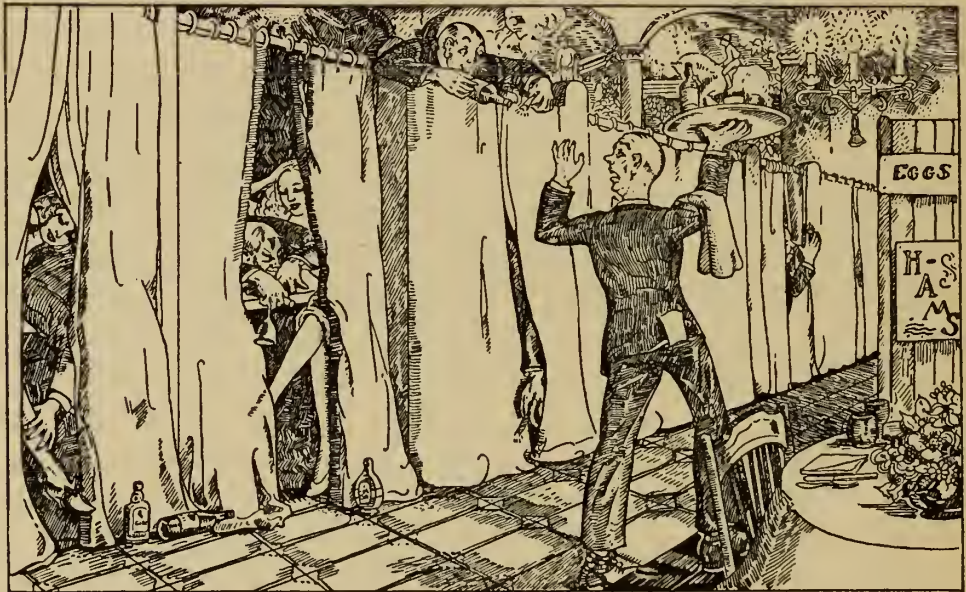
HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

Unseen Faces

or

4 A. M. in a HOLLYWOOD CAFE

- BOOTH FIVE: "You can't rhyme anything with orange."
"Yes, I can, honey. Syringe."
"That's silly. Bet you can't rhyme itsy-bitsy."
- BOOTH THREE: "Let's play 'As-low-as.' You start it."
"Well, I feel as low as an empty bottle."
- BOOTH SIX: "Boy, that's low!" a drunk chimed in.



UNSEEN FACES

- BOOTH FIVE: "Bet you can't rhyme itsy-bitsy."
"Wanta get me thrown out?"
- BOOTH SIX: "Sure!"
- BOOTH THREE: "I feel as low as a hiccup starts. Top that!"
"I feel as low as a gum-wrapper in the sub-
way."
- BOOTH SIX: "Oh, cellophane!" the drunk humored.
- BOOTH TWO: "An' me with my pants down."
"An' then wad he say?"
- BOOTH FIVE: "You can too, rhyme itsy-bitsy!"
- BOOTH FOUR: I just love champagne, don't you?"
"Yeah. Waiter, two beers!"
- BOOTH SIX: "Louse!"
- BOOTH FIVE: "Go on, rhyme itsy-bitsy."
- BOOTH THREE: "As low as an elephant's trunk."
"As low as a dachshund's pup."
- BOOTH SIX: "Oh, how low!"
- BOOTH ONE: "Whaddya want for nuthin'?"
"Whaddya got?"
"That ain't no way to act!"
- BOOTH THREE: "As low as a torch-song's wail."
"As low as Moanin Low!"
- BOOTH SIX: "Oh, remorse!"
- BOOTH ONE: "I thought you said you liked me?"
"Whaddya expect in a restaurant?"
"Service."
- BOOTH SIX: "That's dirty!"
- BOOTH FIVE: "If you rhyme itsy-bitsy."

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

- BOOTH TWO: "So I says: Why should I?"
"An' then wad he say?"
- BOOTH FIVE: "Please rhyme itsy-bitsy for little girl?"
- BOOTH SIX: "Rhyme bitsy for her, or I'll go nuts!"
- BOOTH THREE: "As low as an auto horn's honk."
"As low as a horse's—"
- BOOTH SIX: "Oh, be careful!"
- BOOTH THREE: "A horse's hoof."
- BOOTH SIX: "Oh, relief!"
- BOOTH FIVE: "I will if you rhyme itsy-bitsy."
- BOOTH SIX: "Oh, rhyme itsy-bitsy!"
- BOOTH THREE: "As low as an ant's antennae."
"As low as a flea's uncle Peter."
- BOOTH SIX: "There must be a mistake!"
- BOOTH THREE: "As low as a thermometer's bottom!"
- BOOTH SIX: "Oh, I can't take it!"
- BOOTH FIVE: "Gotta rhyme itsy-bitsy!"
- BOOTH TWO: "So I says: You're no gentleman!"
"An' then wad he say?"
- BOOTH ONE: "Can't, got to powder my nose."
"Can't you do two things at once?"
- BOOTH SIX: "Oh, I'm passin' out! Waiter!"
- BOOTH FIVE: "No itsy-bitsy for little girl?"
- BOOTH TWO: "No break at all, huh?"
"An' me with my pants down."
- BOOTH SIX: "Waiter! Here's somethin' f'r you. Now
you do somethin' f'r me. Rhyme itsy-bitsy
for Booth Five, an' gimme a report on the
gender sittin' in Booth Two.

As Told at the Masquers Club

“Aw, give 'im the works, boys. He's nuts!”

“Harold, you're crazy! You're going soft-hearted, or soft-headed, I can't tell which.”

“Why don't you put your altruistic theories into practice? You're daffy as a loon, and someday they'll drive up and take you for a ride—to a place with a tall iron fence.”

At the Hollywood actors' club, a small group were seated in the lounge kidding Harold Wild.

Harold was an actor of prominence. His friends understood his place on the screen and his excellent portrayals, but not his multivocal rantings on the conventionalism of life which, as he averred, kept people from being themselves—their real selves.

“It's a silly old world,” he often contended. “It's human beings that make existence so miserable.”

Harold Wild was not a character that his name might imply. But he made himself very obnoxious around the club with his theoretical chatter, and so they avoided him—called him “Softy” Wild.

Weeks passed.

Gradually his friends noticed a great change in him. A little coaxing caused him to give in and tell a story concerning himself.

One stormy night, while driving along Hollywood Boulevard in the warm confines of his roomy sedan, he was speculating seriously on why it was, in such a nasty rain, that a man could not throw open his car door and offer a lift to any woman in need.

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

Conventionalism is the answer, he sneered. He had passed up three women at crossings in the last four blocks. Silly conventionalism was the curse of the human family, he thought, stifling a world which might otherwise be a happy playground. What an infantile existence this life really was!

And so he argued on until conscience demanded action. A firm conviction gave him peace of mind: at the next intersection he would do this chivalrous thing without thought of race or age. No one could accuse him of being a masher. His attitude would show that it was all purely an impersonal gesture.

The red light of the traffic signal bloomed into prominence through the veil of mist on his windshield. Slowly he eased his car nearer to the curbing, and through the rivulets of water streaking the glass door, saw a sight which made his soul vibrate with compassion.

"What a crime!" he mumbled.



AS TOLD AT THE MASQUERS CLUB

Sitting on a bus bench in a miserable attitude, a woman was trying to house herself waterproof by holding a newspaper roof-like over her head. Pathetic, he thought sincerely, and threw his car door open in welcome.

"Madam!" he shouted quite reverently. Then he stammered: "I'd like to—would you—it's just my way of—"

The rush of rain down his coat sleeve demanded simplicity, and he intelligently succumbed.

"May I have the privilege of giving you a lift?" he achieved without stuttering.

Dropping the soggy newspaper, the girl rose and skipped the distance to the car quickly, entering with a mumbled "thanks."

The signals changed. The traffic moved on. Harold Wild cleared his throat and expressed his elation.

"I'm very happy that you accepted my offer of a lift. This conventional business is silly, isn't it? Now if you'll just tell me your destination, I'll not even bother you with conversation."

"I can't see very well," she mumbled, peering through the glass. "It's only a few blocks. I suppose I had better watch closely and tell you when to stop."

"Live right on the corner?"

"Why, no, it's about a hundred steps off the boulevard. Five or six doors, anyway. Could you go that far out of your way?"

"Certainly. Just tell me when to turn."

A warm, happy feeling surged through Harold's body as he felt conscious of the girl's eyes upon him. His altruistic attitude held him in certain bounds, but through the dark mirror of the windshield, he was able to steal glances at her shadowed form.

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

With pleasure he recorded that a blonde head crowned a facial contour well chiseled, possessing large eyes which surely must be blue. Her chic hat, well wilted by the rain, caused him to hurl more fiery thoughts against the outrages of conventionalism. What a lovely thing she was! He meant to say something about the condition of her collapsed hat, but when his mouth opened, it asked:

“What’s your name?”

What made him say that, he thought. Immediately astonished, his blood congealed; but relief came when he heard her answer:

“Elaine.” Then she added: “This is it. Turn here, please.”

“To the right,” he managed with a gulp.

“Yes. It’s a dark street, isn’t it? Wonder why they don’t light side streets better?”

“Politics!” Harold answered freely, turning off the boulevard. “You always find politics at the bottom of everything. Why, it’s a shame to allow women to go about with such lack of protection.”

Gradually he slowed the car up to the curb where the girl was pointing. Reaching behind her shoulder to flip the door open, he experienced surprise in viewing nothing but a vacant lot. He was further surprised when he became conscious of gazing down the barrel of a baby automatic.

“Give me your wallet!” the girl commanded calmly. “Hand over your extra change too. I’ll take that ring and those cuff links. Add the wrist watch, and make it snappy!”

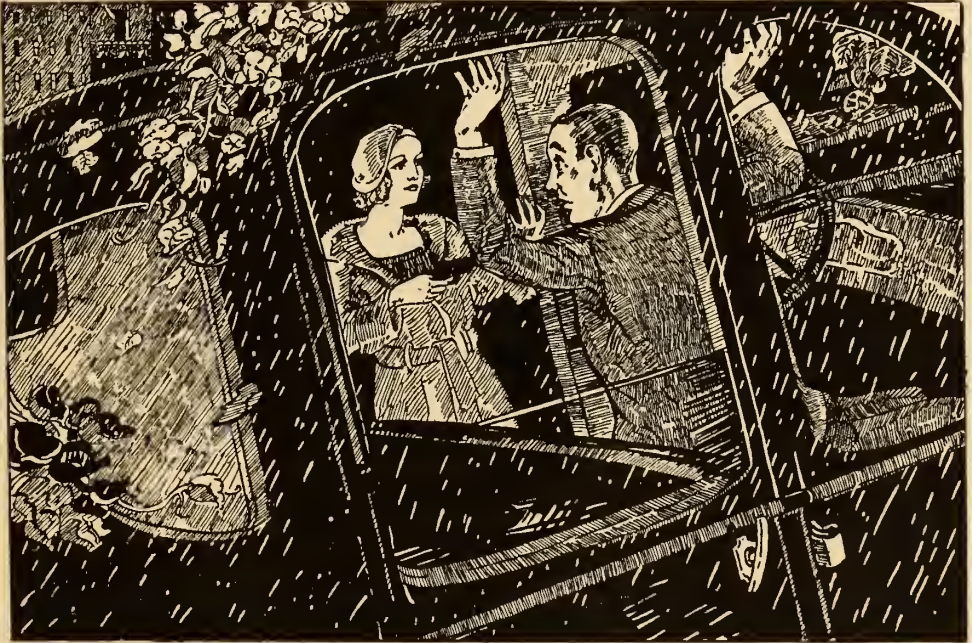
As he watched his companion bow out of the car, his ears rang with some hissing phrases, quite humiliating.

AS TOLD AT THE MASQUERS CLUB

“Don’t look back until you get around that next corner,” she advised strongly. “Thanks for the buggy ride, and for not being conventional. My name’s really Elaine. Next time you should pick up Ethyl. Much faster, they say.”

Slamming the door, she disappeared in the rain.

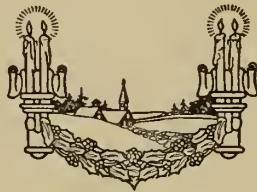
Harold Wild sped to the lighted boulevard while cold chills and odd, indescribable emotions played a strange tattoo upon his body. As he got settled into traffic, his mind seemed to refuse to function. No phrase, however profane, would formulate into suitable expression. He wasn’t one to talk to himself. But presently his dry throat relaxed, his mouth moved, and from the



HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

depths of his diaphragm came the energy to form the humorous declaration which crossed his mind.

“Well, I’ll be a dirty name!” he exclaimed, and kept his car in the center of the street.



Murder at the Studio

Violent lightning flashes through the drawing-room windows reveal the snarled face of the maniac outside in the rain.

A figure is seen at a secret panel behind the fireplace, listening.

“Well, Chief, an actor has just pulled a fast one on us. Yes, this is Moriarity talkin’. Yes, I’m in the house now. Dugan is with me. Somethin’ has happened. So I thought I’d better give yuh a buz quick.”

“Okay, let’s have it.”

“Well, we came here as planned. Entered through the kitchen. There’s a housekeeper carin’ for the place. Nobody else on the premises. We tell her to keep shut. Then we ease into the drawin’ room and—”

“What’s the long detail for?”

“But I’m tellin’ yuh. Purty soon we hears a latch key at the front door and take positions on the back swing of it. When he closes the door, we surprise him plenty.”

“Let’s have it faster!”

“Yeah. So he says: ‘Guess the jig’s up,’ or somethin’ like that. I agree, with my gat on him. He says that he’s been expectin’ it, but that it hasn’t turned out just like he imagined it was goin’ ta. So I say, ‘Come on, let’s get goin’,’ an’ he says, ‘Wait till I get a coat.’ Then he starts upstairs. Dugan is quick to foller him.”

A man dressed like a chef passes a gun to the figure at the secret panel by the fireplace and disappears. The shadowed

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

figure with the gun closes the panel, then moves mysteriously into the drawing room behind the screen.

“But, Chief, I am explainin’ it fast. Half-way up the stairs the actor turns and says: ‘Listen, I surrender. Don’t act like boy scouts. You both have your gats out. All I want is an overcoat. It’s rainin’ like hell, you know. Have a drink. You’ll find a decanter in the library.’ Well, we relax, Chief, but we don’t take no liquor. All at once we hear a shot comin’ from upstairs. Then we hear a body fall with a thud to the floor—”

The Chief laughs derisively.

“Yeah, I know we oughta be ashamed. If you could only see me now, you’d see how ashamed I look. So I thought if I came clean with the story, you wouldn’t laugh Dugan and me off the pay roll. It’s suicide, I tell yuh! We just heard the shot a second ago. Then I grab the ’phone an’ waste no time in reportin’. No. No. Yes, I know we shoulda. I never thought to look upstairs. I’ll do it now an’ report again.”

* * * *

Laying aside his manuscript notes, the author lit a cigarette and watched the smoke wind sinuously toward the ceiling on the even fog of the room. Then he drew his typewriter toward him and began to feel out the succeeding episode in the scenario continuity. Rapidly he wrote his inspirational twist:

SCENE 179. (NIGHT)

SOUND

Close-up Moriarity
at telephone.

MURDER AT THE STUDIO

Moriarity hangs up 'phone, drops jaw, gazes out of scene toward Dugan. Gets over that he is the world's worst detective. As he rises, he casts questioning eyes toward the upstairs bedroom, and grimaces.

Say, Dugan, an' have I pulled the boneheaded trick!

(Mumbles)

Let's take a squint at the body.

PANORAM with camera as Moriarity starts walking toward Dugan. Dugan registers a nauseated expression for their stupidity.

DUGAN

Like chastised children, they move forward. Follow them with camera, then:

Boy! Will we get hell when we get back to headquarters!

TRUCK WITH THEM TO STAIRS.

MORIARITY

And how! Guess we might as well resign.

DISSOLVE AND INTERLACE TO:

SCENE 180.

INTERIOR ACTOR'S
2nd FLOOR BEDROOM.

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

Moriarity enters bedroom. Dugan is following, looking right and left. They expect to see the actor's body prone on the floor in suicide. Dugan is attracted by, and points to:

SCENE 181.

(NIGHT)

DUGAN

Cut in flash of:

LIGHTNING AT WINDOW.
WIND BLOWS LACE CUR-
TAINS.

(Voice off scene)

Oh, cripes! What in hell
will we tell the Chief?

SCENE 182.

LONG SHOT BEDROOM.

MORIARITY

Long enough shot to show room is empty, and the bird has flown out the open window. As Dugan and Moriarity register that they have been hoaxed, they cast dark glances of despair at each other, and we:

Guess we'd better write
our resignation. Then we'll
never have to go back.

(FADE OUT)

(END EPISODE FIVE)

MURDER AT THE STUDIO

SCENE 183. (NIGHT)

OFFICE,
CHIEF OF POLICE.

Include detective Martin
standing at desk.

The typewriter stopped suddenly, the author turned toward the hall door, and yelled:

"Come in."

The office door opened three-quarters. Then a man, with a tilted straw hat over his eyes and a cigarette pasted to his lower lip, stuck his head into the room, exclaiming:

"Hi, Harry! What the hell, it's 12:20. This funny studio still allows time out for lunch. Going to write on that silly mystery story of yours all day? What is it, a non-stop effort? Are you getting a bonus, or have you gone nuts?"

"No, d'jeat?"

"No, jew?"

"No, let's!"

The author shoved his typewriter away, yawned, grabbed his hat, and joined his *confreere*. As he moved languidly down the hall, he asked uninterestedly:

"What have they got you on today—research?"

"Naw! We've just had a three-hour conference on how it was possible to do the Life of Du Barry and please the censors. I suggested doing Little Lord Fauntleroy."

"What's the matter, won't they let you show the sewers of Paris any more?"

"Don't pun, Harry! You won't feel so chipper when they

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

raise hell with you about all the crime you inject into those murder-mystery stories you write. What you struggling on now? How's it coming? Have you got it all screwy and mixed up yet?"

"I'll say I have! I've got it so mixed up now that even I don't know who committed the murder."

"No kiddin'? What's the big twist this time?"

"Oh, a swell twister. I have an actor running all through it, and they suspect him right from the start. They're sure!"

"Yeah, well?"

"Well, don't you get it? Great surprise! Never been done before. The one the audience suspects at the start really did the killing. Surprise enough? What do you think?"



MURDER AT THE STUDIO

“It’s a knockout, Harry!” his friend answered insincerely, and thought strongly of roast beef and gravy as they strolled out of the studio gate toward the beanery.



H O L L Y W O O D S H O R T S

Screwy

- “My, your cigar makes a red glow in the darkness.”
“So does your cigarette, Helen.”
“Let’s quit the stalling, Bert. Why did you get me up here?”
“You ought to know.”
“I don’t.”
“You’ve a pretty good idea.”
“Now don’t try to frighten me!”
“Don’t tell me that you could be frightened.”
“What should I say?”
“Say what you feel.”
“I feel like a drink.”
“Help yourself, if you can find it in the dark.”
“You’re not a very nice host.”
“Here, I’ll pour it for you.”
“You avoided my question.”
“Did I?”
“Listen, Bert, I heard a gun shot in the hall.”
“That was a motor exhaust in the street.”
“You’re lying. Now I *am* getting frightened!”
“Why?”
“Don’t be silly. Turn on the lights.”
“I won’t!”
“Then I will!”
“If you move from this divan, you’ll regret it!”
“Listen to me, it’s time I know why you got me here.”
“You’ll find out when the time comes.”
“That time is now!”

SCREWY

"No, it isn't."

"Bert!"

"Yes."

"This has gone far enough!"

"Un-uh."

"And don't talk in grunts."

"I'll talk plenty when the mug gets here!"

"Bert, have you gone mad? I'm being held for—"

"You are."

"This is an outrage. I have a gun in my bag!"

"But you won't use it."

"What makes you think I won't?"

"Because your father is the mug I'm waiting for."

"I always knew you were a cad!"

"Those are silly words."

"These aren't. Get a load of this!"

"Well, you ought to be careful about empty guns."

* * * *

"I'm askin' yuh, Al. Imagine havin' tuh learn such screwy dialogue?"

"You said it, Aggie, but it's got to be done. Screwy writers!"

"Let's relax and hoof it around the studio lot a while."

"Okay. No kiddin', I'll bet this picture is goin' tuh smell!"

"Don't listen so good."

"Wonder why they wanna write such stripe for?"

"I give up."

"Ain't writers clucks?"

"They pain me in the neck!"

"Writers are what make so many pictures flops."

HOLLYWOOD SHORTS

"I'll say!"

"Bet this one flops!"

"Yeah. Still it's full of action."

"That covers a lotta plot."

"You said a mouthful!"

"Well, if this one's oak, then I'm a goof!"

"Yeah."

"How'd yuh mean yeah?"

"Just kiddin'."

"You're a fresh punk. I mean it's writers that makes fold-ups."

"Sure. How long yuh been in pictures?"

"Coupla years. Came right from high school."

"Didja graduate?"

"Naw, hell with it. I wanted to try an' get into picture dough."

"Don't take nothin' but breaks to get to the dough."

"An' how!"

"I been in now two years—'bout—a little shorta. No break yet."

"Say, yuh know what I beena thinkin' since we been walkin'?"

"I donno."

"We beena talkin' the most natural dialogue."

"Guess we have. An' 'cause why? 'Cause we been unconscious."

"That's right, just what I mean."

"If writers could only write natural stuff like that—"

"They'd be knockouts."

S C R E W Y

“They’re a screwy lot. Let’s skip ’em.”

“Oak by me.”

“Let’s go into the whatsit restaurant place. Didja eat yet?”

“No can do. On the ol’ diet stuff. Fer tha figure.”

“Can’t yuh squat on a stool an’ keep me company?”

“Okay, an’ we’ll run that lousy dialogue again.”



